

LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL, 1872.



THE ROOM IN THE DRAGON VOLANT.

By J. S. LE FANU.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ORACLE TELLS ME WONDERS.

I FORGOT for a moment how impervious my mask and domino were to the hard stare of the old campaigner, and was preparing for an animated scuffle. It was only for a moment, of course; but the Count cautiously drew a little back as the gasconading corporal, in blue uniform, white vest, and white gaiters—for my friend Gaillarde was as loud and swaggering in his assumed character as in his real one of a colonel of dragoons—drew near. He had already twice all but got himself turned out of doors for vaunting the exploits of Napoleon le Grand, in terrific mock-heroics, and had very nearly come to hand-grips with a Prussian hussar. In fact, he would have been involved in several sanguinary rows already, had not his discretion reminded him that the object of his coming there at all, namely, to arrange a meeting with an affluent widow, on whom he believed he had made a tender impression, would not have been promoted by his premature removal from the festive scene, of which he was an ornament, in charge of a couple of gens d'armes.

'Money! Gold! Bah! What money can a wounded soldier like your humble servant have amassed, with but his sword-hand left, which, being necessarily occupied, places not a finger at his command with which to scrape together the spoils of a routed enemy?'

'No gold from him,' said the magician. 'His scars frank him.'

'Bravo, monsieur le prophète! Bravissimo! Here I am. Shall I

begin, mon conjureur, without further loss of time, to question you?'

Without waiting for an answer, he commenced, in Stentorian tones.

After half-a-dozen questions and answers, he asked—

'Whom do I pursue at present?'

'Two persons.'

'Ha! Two? Well, who are they?'

'An Englishman, whom, if you catch, he will kill you; and a French widow, whom if you find, she will spit in your face.'

'Monsieur le magicien calls a spade a spade, and knows that his cloth protects him. No matter! Why do I pursue them?'

'The widow has inflicted a wound on your heart, and the Englishman a wound on your head. They are each separately too strong for you; take care your pursuit does not unite them.'

'Bah! How could that be?'

'The Englishman protects ladies. He has got that fact into your head. The widow, if she sees, will marry him. It takes some time, she will reflect, to become a colonel, and the Englishman is unquestionably young.'

'I will cut his cock's-comb for him,' he ejaculated with an oath and a grin; and in a softer tone he asked, 'Where is she?'

'Near enough to be offended if you fail.'

'So she ought, by my faith. You are right, monsieur le prophète! A hundred thousand thanks! Farewell! And staring about him, and stretching his lank

neck as high as he could, he strode away with his scars, and white waistcoat and gaiters, and his bearskin shako.

I had been trying to see the person who sat in the palanquin. I had only once an opportunity of a tolerably steady peep. What I saw was singular. The oracle was dressed, as I have said, very richly, in the Chinese fashion. He was a figure altogether on a larger scale than the interpreter, who stood outside. The features seemed to me large and heavy, and the head was carried with a downward inclination! the eyes were closed, and the chin rested on the breast of his embroidered pelisse. The face seemed fixed, and the very image of apathy. Its character and *pose* seemed an exaggerated repetition of the immobility of the figure who communicated with the noisy outer world. This face looked blood-red; but that was caused, I concluded, by the light entering through the red silk curtains. All this struck me almost at a glance; I had not many seconds in which to make my observation. The ground was now clear, and the Marquis said, 'Go forward, my friend.'

I did so. When I reached the magician, as we called the man with the black wand, I glanced over my shoulder to see whether the Count was near.

No, he was some yards behind; and he and the Marquis, whose curiosity seemed to be, by this time, satisfied, were now conversing generally upon some subject of course quite different.

I was relieved, for the sage seemed to blurt out secrets in an unexpected way; and some of mine might not have amused the Count.

I thought for a moment. I wished to test the prophet. A Church-of-England man was a *rare avis* in Paris.

'What is my religion?' I asked.

'A beautiful heresy,' answered the oracle instantly.

'A heresy?—and pray how is it named?'

'Love.'

'Oh! Then I suppose I am a polytheist, and love a great many?'

'One.'

'But, seriously,' I asked, intending to turn the course of our colloquy a little out of an embarrassing channel, 'have I ever learned any words of devotion by heart?'

'Yes.'

'Can you repeat them?'

'Approach.'

I did, and lowered my ear.

The man with the black wand closed the curtains, and whispered, slowly and distinctly, these words, which, I need scarcely tell you, I instantly recognized:

I may never see you more; and, oh! that I could forget you! go—farewell—for God's sake, go!

I started as I heard them. They were, you know, the last words whispered to me by the Countess.

Good Heaven! How miraculous! Words heard, most assuredly, by no ear on earth but my own and the lady's who uttered them, till now!

I looked at the impassive face of the spokesman with the wand. There was no trace of meaning, or even of a consciousness that the words he had uttered could possibly interest me.

'What do I most long for?' I asked, scarcely knowing what I said.

'Paradise.'

'And what prevents my reaching it?'

'A black veil.'

Stronger and stronger! The answers seemed to me to indicate the minutest acquaintance with every detail of my little romance, of which not even the Marquis knew anything! And I, the questioner, masked and robed so that my own brother could not have known me!

'You said I loved some one. Am I loved in return?' I asked.

'Try.'

I was speaking lower than before, and stood near the dark man with the beard, to prevent the necessity of his speaking in a loud key.

'Does any one love me?' I repeated.

'Secretly,' was the answer.

'Much or little?' I inquired.

'Too well.'

'How long will that love last?'

'Till the rose casts its leaves.'

'The rose—another allusion!'

'Then—darkness!' I sighed.

'But till then I live in light.'

'The light of violet eyes.'

Love, if not a religion, as the oracle had just pronounced it, is, at least, a superstition. How it exalts the imagination! How it enervates the reason! How credulous it makes us!

All this which, in the case of another, I should have laughed at, most powerfully affected me in my own. It inflamed my ardour, and half crazed my brain, and even influenced my conduct.

The spokesman of this wonderful trick—if trick it were—now waved me backward with his wand, and as I withdrew, my eyes still fixed upon the group, by this time encircled with an aura of mystery in my fancy; backing toward the ring of spectators, I saw him raise his hand suddenly, with a gesture of command, as a signal to the usher who carried the golden wand in front.

The usher struck his wand on the ground, and, in a shrill voice, proclaimed: 'The great Confu is silent for an hour.'

Instantly the bearers pulled down a sort of blind of bamboo, which descended with a sharp clatter, and secured it at the bottom; and then the man in the tall fez, with the black beard and wand, began a sort of dervish

dance. In this the men with the gold wands joined, and finally, in an outer ring, the bearers, the palanquin being the centre of the circles described by these solemn dancers, whose pace, little by little, quickened, whose gestures grew sudden, strange, frantic, as the motion became swifter and swifter, until at length the whirl became so rapid that the dancers seemed to fly by with the speed of a mill-wheel, and amid a general clapping of hands, and universal wonder, these strange performers mingled with the crowd, and the exhibition, for the time at least, ended.

The Marquis d'Harmonville was standing not far away, looking on the ground, as one could judge by his attitude and musing. I approached, and he said:

'The Count has just gone away to look for his wife. It is a pity she was not here to consult the prophet; it would have been amusing, I daresay, to see how the Count bore it. Suppose we follow him. I have asked him to introduce you.'

With a beating heart, I accompanied the Marquis d'Harmonville.

CHAPTER XIV.

MADemoiselle DE LA Vallière.

We wandered through the salons, the Marquis and I. It was no easy matter to find a friend in rooms so crowded.

'Stay here,' said the Marquis, 'I have thought of a way of finding him. Besides, his jealousy may have warned him that there is no particular advantage to be gained by presenting you to his wife, I had better go and reason with him; as you seem to wish an introduction so very much.'

This occurred in the room that is now called the 'Salon d'Apollon.' The paintings remained in my me-

mory, and my adventure of that evening was destined to occur there.

I sat down upon a sofa; and looked about me. Three or four persons beside myself were seated on this roomy piece of gilded furniture. They were chatting all very gaily; all—except the person who sat next me, and she was a lady. Hardly two feet interposed between us. The lady sat apparently in a reverie. Nothing could be more graceful. She wore the costume perpetuated in Collignan's full-length portrait of Mademoiselle de la Vallière. It is as you know not only rich, but elegant. Her hair was powdered, but one could perceive that it was naturally a dark-brown. One pretty little foot appeared, and could anything be more exquisite than her hand?

It was extremely provoking that this lady wore her mask, and did not, as many did, hold it for a time in her hand.

I was convinced that she was pretty. Availing myself of the privilege of a masquerade, a microcosm in which it is impossible, except by voice and allusion, to distinguish friend from foe, I spoke—

'It is not easy, mademoiselle, to deceive me,' I began.

'So much the better for monsieur,' answered the mask, quietly.

'I mean,' I said, determined to tell my fib, 'that beauty is a gift more difficult to conceal than mademoiselle supposes.'

'Yet monsieur has succeeded very well,' she said in the same sweet and careless tones.

'I see the costume of this, the beautiful Mademoiselle de la Vallière, upon a form that surpasses her own; I raise my eyes, and I behold a mask, and yet I recognize the lady; beauty is like that precious stone in the "Arabian

Nights" which emits, no matter how concealed, a light that betrays it.'

'I know the story,' said the young lady. 'The light betrayed it, not in the sun, but in darkness. Is there so little light in these rooms, monsieur, that a poor glow-worm can show so brightly. I thought we were in a luminous atmosphere, wherever a certain countess moved?'

Here was an awkward speech! How was I to answer? This lady might be, as they say some ladies are, a lover of mischief, or an intimate of the Countess de St. Alyre. Cautiously, therefore, I inquired,

'What countess?'

'If you know me,' you must know that she is my dearest friend. Is she not beautiful?'

'How can I answer, there are so many countesses.'

'Every one who knows me, knows who my best beloved friend is. You don't know me?'

'That is cruel. I can scarcely believe I am mistaken.'

'With whom were you walking, just now?' she asked.

'A gentleman, a friend,' I answered.

'I saw him, of course, a friend; but I think I know him, and should like to be certain. Is he not a certain marquis?'

Here was another question that was extremely awkward.

'There are so many people here, and one may walk, at one time, with one, and at another with a different one, that—'

'That an unscrupulous person has no difficulty in evading a simple question, like mine. Know then, once for all, that nothing disgusts a person of spirit so much as suspicion. You, monsieur, are a gentleman of discretion. I shall respect you accordingly.'

'Mademoiselle would despise me, were I to violate a confidence.'

'But you don't deceive me, You imitate your friend's diplomacy. I hate diplomacy. It means fraud and cowardice. Don't you think I know him. The gentleman with the cross of white ribbon on his breast. I know the Marquis d'Harmonville perfectly. You see to what good purpose your ingenuity has been expended.'

'To that conjecture I can answer neither yes nor no.'

'You need not. But what was your motive in mortifying a lady?'

'It is the last thing on earth I should do.'

'You affected to know me, and you don't; through caprice or listlessness or curiosity you wished to converse, not with a lady, but with a costume. You admired, and you pretend to mistake me for another. But who is quite perfect? Is truth any longer to be found on earth?'

'Mademoiselle has formed a mistaken opinion of me.'

'And you also of me; you find me less foolish than you supposed. I know perfectly whom you intend amusing with compliments and melancholy declamation, and whom, with that amiable purpose, you have been seeking.'

'Tell me whom you mean,' I entreated.

'Upon one condition.'

'What is that?'

'That you will confess if I name the lady.'

'You describe my object unfairly.' I objected. 'I can't admit that I proposed speaking to any lady in the tone you describe.'

'Well, I shan't insist on that; only if I name the lady, you will promise to admit that I am right.'

'Must I promise?'

'Certainly not, there is no compulsion; but your promise is the only condition on which I will speak to you again.'

I hesitated for a moment; but

how could she possibly tell? The Countess would scarcely have admitted this little romance to any one; and the masque in the La Vallière costume could not possibly know who the masked domino beside her was.

'I consent,' I said, 'I promise.'

'You must promise on the honour of a gentleman.'

'Well, I do; on the honour of a gentleman.'

'Then this lady is the Countess de St. Alyre.' I was unspeakably surprized; I was disconcerted; but I remembered my promise, and said—

'The Countess de St. Alyre is, unquestionably, the lady to whom I hoped for an introduction to-night; but I beg to assure you, also on the honour of a gentleman, that she has not the faintest imaginable suspicion that I was seeking such an honour, nor, in all probability, does she remember that such a person as I exists. I had the honour to render her and the Count a trifling service, too trifling, I fear, to have earned more than an hour's recollection.'

'The world is not so ungrateful as you suppose; or if it be, there are, nevertheless, a few hearts that redeem it. I can answer for the Countess de St. Alyre, she never forgets a kindness. She does not show all she feels; for she is unhappy, and cannot.'

'Unhappy! I feared, indeed, that might be. But for all the rest that you are good enough to suppose, it is but a flattering dream.'

'I told you that I am the Countess's friend, and being so I must know something of her character; also, there are confidences between us, and I may know more than you think, of those trifling services of which you suppose the recollection is so transitory.'

I was becoming more and more

interested. I was as wicked as other young men, and the heinousness of such a pursuit was as nothing, now that self-love and all the passions that mingle in such a romance, were roused. The image of the beautiful Countess had now again quite superseded the pretty counterpart of La Vallière, who was before me. I would have given a great deal to hear, in solemn earnest, that she did remember the champion, who, for her sake, had thrown himself before the sabre of an enraged dragoon, with only a cudgel in his hand, and conquered.

'You say the Countess is unhappy,' said I. 'What causes her unhappiness?'

'Many things. Her husband is old, jealous, and tyrannical. Is not that enough? Even when relieved from his society, she is lonely.'

'But you are her friend?' I suggested.

'And you think one friend enough?' she answered; 'she has one alone, to whom she can open her heart.'

'Is there room for another friend?'

'Try.'

'How can I find a way?'

'She will aid you.'

'How?'

She answered by a question, 'Have you secured rooms in either of the hotels of Versailles?'

'No, I could not. I am lodged in the Dragon Volant, which stands at the verge of the grounds of the Château de la Carque.'

'That is better still. I need not ask if you have courage for an adventure. I need not ask if you are a man of honour. A lady may trust herself to you, and fear nothing. There are few men to whom the interview, such as I shall arrange, could be granted with safety. You shall meet her

at two o'clock this morning in the Parc of the Château de la Carque. What room do you occupy in the Dragon Volant?'

I was amazed at the audacity and decision of this girl. Was she, as we say in England, *hoaxing me*?

'I can describe that accurately,' said I. 'As I look from the rear of the house, in which my apartment is, I am at the extreme right, next the angle; and one pair of stairs up, from the hall.'

'Very well; you must have observed, if you looked into the park, two or three clumps of chestnut and lime-trees, growing so close together as to form a small grove. You must return to your hotel, change your dress, and, preserving a scrupulous secrecy, as to why or where you go, leave the Dragon Volant, and climb the park-wall, unseen; you will easily recognize the grove I have mentioned; there you will meet the Countess, who will grant you an audience of a few minutes, who will expect the most scrupulous reserve on your part, and who will explain to you, in a few words, a great deal which I could not so well tell you here.'

I cannot describe the feeling with which I heard these words. I was astounded. Doubt succeeded. I could not believe these agitating words.

'Mademoiselle will believe that if I only dared assure myself that so great a happiness and honour were really intended for me, my gratitude would be as lasting as my life. But how dare I believe that mademoiselle does not speak, rather from her own sympathy or goodness, than from a certainty that the Countess de St. Alyre would concede so great an honour?'

'Monsieur believes either that I am not, as I pretend to be, in the secret which he hitherto supposed to be shared by no one but

the Countess and himself, or else that I am cruelly mystifying him. That I am in her confidence, I swear by all that is dear in a whispered farewell. By the last companion of this flower!" and she took for a moment in her fingers the nodding head of a white rosebud that was nestled in her bouquet. 'By my own good star, and hers—or shall I call it our "*belle étoile*?" Have I said enough?'

'Enough?' I repeated, 'more than enough—a thousand thanks.'

'And being thus in her confidence, I am clearly her friend; and being a friend would it be friendly to use her dear name so; and all for sake of practising a vulgar trick upon you—a stranger?'

'Mademoiselle will forgive me. Remember how very precious is the hope of seeing, and speaking to the Countess. Is it wonderful, then, that I should falter in my belief? You have convinced me, however, and will forgive my hesitation.'

'You will be at the place I have described, then, at two o'clock?'

'Assuredly,' I answered.

'And monsieur, I know, will not fail, through fear. No, he need not assure me; his courage is already proved.'

'No danger, in such a case, will be unwelcome to me.'

'Had you not better go now, monsieur, and rejoin your friend?'

'I promised to wait here for my friend's return. The Count de St. Alyre said that he intended to introduce me to the Countess.'

'And monsieur is so simple as to believe him?'

'Why should I not?'

'Because he is jealous and cunning. You will see. He will never introduce you to his wife. He will come here and say he cannot find her, and promise another time.'

'I think I see him approaching,

with my friend. No—there is no lady with him.'

'I told you so. You will wait a long time for that happiness, if it is never to reach you except through his hands. In the meantime, you had better not let him see you so near me. He will suspect that we have been talking of his wife; and that will whet his jealousy and his vigilance.'

I thanked my unknown friend in the mask, and withdrawing a few steps, came, by a little '*circumbendibus*,' upon the flank of the Count.

I smiled under my mask, as he assured me that the Duchesse de la Roqueme had changed her place, and taken the Countess with her, but he hoped, at some very early time, to have an opportunity of enabling her to make my acquaintance.

I avoided the Marquis d'Harmonville, who was following the Count. I was afraid he might propose accompanying me home, and had no wish to be forced to make an explanation.

I lost myself quickly, therefore, in the crowd, and moved, as rapidly as it would allow me, toward the *Galérie des Glacés*, which lay in the direction opposite to that in which I saw the Count and my friend the Marquis moving.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRANGE STORY OF THE DRAGON VOLANT.

These *fêtes* were earlier in those days, and in France, than our modern balls are in London. I consulted my watch. It was a little past twelve.

It was a still and sultry night; the magnificent suite of rooms, vast as some of them were, could not be kept at a temperature less than oppressive, especially to

people with masks on. In some places the crowd was inconvenient, and the profusion of lights added to the heat. I removed my mask, therefore, as I saw some other people do, who were as careless of mystery as I. I had hardly done so, and began to breathe more comfortably, when I heard a friendly English voice call me by my name. It was Tom Whistlewick, of the —th Dragoons. He had unmasked, with a very flushed face, as I did. He was one of those Waterloo heroes, new from the mint of glory, whom, as a body, all the world, except France, revered; and the only thing I knew against him, was a habit of allaying his thirst, which was excessive, at balls, *fêtes*, musical parties, and all gatherings, where it was to be had, with champagne; and, as he introduced me to his friend, Monsieur Carmagnac, I observed that he spoke a little thick. Monsieur Carmagnac was little, lean, and as straight as a ramrod. He was bald, took snuff, and wore spectacles; and, as I soon learned, held an official position.

Tom was facetious, sly, and rather difficult to understand, in his present pleasant mood. He was elevating his eyebrows and screwing his lips oddly, and fanning himself vaguely with his mask.

After some agreeable conversation, I was glad to observe that he preferred silence, and was satisfied with the rôle of listener, as I and Monsieur Carmagnac chatted; and he seated himself, with extraordinary caution and indecision, upon a bench, beside us, and seemed very soon to find a difficulty in keeping his eyes open.

'I heard you mention,' said the French gentleman, 'that you had engaged an apartment in the Dragon Volant, about half a league from this. When I was in a different police department, about four

years ago, two very strange cases were connected with that house. One was of a wealthy *émigré*, permitted to return to France, by the Em—by Napoleon. He vanished. The other—equally strange—was the case of a Russian of rank and wealth. He disappeared just as mysteriously.'

'My servant,' I said, 'gave me a confused account of some occurrences, and, as well as I recollect he described the same persons—I mean a returned French nobleman, and a Russian gentleman. But he made the whole story so marvellous—I mean in the supernatural sense—that, I confess, I did not believe a word of it.'

'No, there was nothing supernatural; but a great deal inexplicable,' said the French gentleman. 'Of course there may be theories; but the thing was never explained, nor, so far as I know, was a ray of light ever thrown upon it.'

'Pray let me hear the story,' I said. 'I think I have a claim, as it affects my quarters. You don't suspect the people of the house?'

'Oh! it has changed hands since then. But there seemed to be a fatality about a particular room.'

'Could you describe that room?'

'Certainly. It is a spacious, panelled, bed-room, up one pair of stairs, in the back of the house, and at the extreme right, as you look from its windows.'

'Ho! Really? Why, then, I have got the very room!' I said, beginning to be more interested—perhaps the least bit in the world, disagreeably. 'Did the people die, or were they actually spirited away?'

'No, they did not die—they disappeared very oddly. I'll tell you the particulars—I happen to know them exactly, because I made an official visit, on the first occasion, to the house, to collect evidence;

and although I did not go down there, upon the second, the papers came before me, and I dictated the official letter despatched to the relations of the people who had disappeared: they had applied to the government to investigate the affair. We had letters from the same relations more than two years later, from which we learned that the missing men had never turned up.'

He took a pinch of snuff, and looked steadily at me.

'Never! I shall relate all that happened, so far as we could discover. The French noble, who was the Chevalier Chateau Blasse-mare, unlike most *emigrés*, had taken the matter in time, sold a large portion of his property before the revolution had proceeded so far as to render that next to impossible, and retired with a large sum. He brought with him about half a million of francs, the greater part of which he invested in the French funds; a much larger sum remained in Austrian land and securities. You will observe then that this gentleman was rich, and there was no allegation of his having lost money, or being, in any way, embarrassed. You see?'

I assented.

'This gentleman's habits were not expensive in proportion to his means. He had suitable lodgings in Paris; and for a time, society, the theatres, and other reasonable amusements, engrossed him. He did not play. He was a middle-aged man, affecting youth, with the vanities which are usual in such persons; but, for the rest, he was a gentle and polite person, who disturbed nobody—a person, you see, not likely to provoke an enmity.'

'Certainly not,' I agreed.

'Early in the summer of 1811, he got an order permitting him to

copy a picture in one of these *salons*, and came down, here, to Versailles, for the purpose. His work was getting on slowly. After a time he left his hotel, here, and went, by way of change, to the Dragon Volant: there he took, by special choice, the bed-room which has fallen to you by chance. From this time, it appeared, he painted little; and seldom visited his apartments in Paris. One night he saw the host of the Dragon Volant, and told him that he was going into Paris, to remain for a day or two, on very particular business; that his servant would accompany him, but that he would retain his apartments at the Dragon Volant, and return in a few days. He left some clothes there, but packed a portmanteau, took his dressing-case, and the rest, and, with his servant behind his carriage, drove into Paris. You observe all this, monsieur?'

'Most attentively,' I answered.

'Well, monsieur, so soon as they were approaching his lodgings, he stopped the carriage on a sudden, told his servant that he had changed his mind; that he would sleep elsewhere that night, that he had very particular business in the north of France, not far from Rouen, that he would set out before daylight on his journey, and return in a fortnight. He called a *fiaacre*, took in his hand a leathern bag which, the servant said, was just large enough to hold a few shirts and a coat, but that it was enormously heavy, as he could testify, for he held it in his hand, while his master took out his purse to count thirty-nix napoleons, for which the servant was to account, when he should return. He then sent him on, in the carriage; and he, with the bag I have mentioned, got into the *fiaacre*. Up to that, you see, the narrative is quite clear.'

'Perfectly,' I agreed.

'Now comes the mystery,' said Monsieur Carmagnac. 'After that, the Count Chateau Blassemare was never more seen, so far as we can make out, by acquaintance or friend. We learned that the day before the Count's stockbroker had, by his direction, sold all his stock in the French funds, and handed him the cash it realized. The reason he gave him for this measure tallied with what he said to his servant. He told him that he was going to the north of France to settle some claims, and did not know exactly how much might be required. The bag, which had puzzled the servant by its weight, contained, no doubt, a large sum in gold. Will monsieur try my snuff?'

He politely tendered his open snuff-box, of which I partook, experimentally.

'A reward was offered,' he continued, 'when the inquiry was instituted, for any information tending to throw a light upon the mystery, which might be afforded by the driver of the fiacre "employed on the night of" (so-and-so), "at about the hour of half-past ten, by a gentleman, with a black-leather travelling-bag in his hand, who descended from a private carriage, and gave his servant some money, which he counted twice over." About a hundred-and-fifty drivers applied, but not one of them was the right man. We did, however, elicit a curious and unexpected piece of evidence in quite another quarter. What a racket that plaguey harlequin makes with his sword!'

'Intolerable!' I chimed in.

The harlequin was soon gone, and he resumed.

'The evidence I speak of, came from a boy, about twelve years old, who knew the appearance of the Count perfectly, having been

often employed by him as a messenger. He stated that about half-past twelve o'clock, on the same night—upon which you are to observe, there was a brilliant moon—he was sent, his mother having been suddenly taken ill, for the *sage femme* who lived within a stone's throw of the Dragon Volant. His father's house, from which he started, was a mile away, or more, from that inn, in order to reach which he had to pass round the park of the Château de la Carque, at the site most remote from the point to which he was going. It passes the old churchyard of St. Aubin, which is separated from the road only by a very low fence, and two or three enormous old trees. The boy was a little nervous as he approached this ancient cemetery; and, under the bright moonlight, he saw a man whom he distinctly recognised as the Count, whom they designated by a soubriquet which means "the man of smiles." He was looking rueful enough now, and was seated on the side of a tombstone, on which he had laid a pistol, while he was ramming home the charge of another.

'The boy got cautiously by, on tiptoe, with his eyes all the time on the Count Chateau Blassemare, or the man he mistook for him; his dress was not what he usually wore, but the witness swore that he could not be mistaken as to his identity. He said his face looked grave and stern; but though he did not smile, it was the same face he knew so well. Nothing would make him swerve from that. If that were he, it was the last time he was seen. He has never been heard of since. Nothing could be heard of him in the neighbourhood of Rouen. There has been no evidence of his death; and there is no sign that he is living.'

'That certainly is a most singular case,' I replied; and was about to ask a question or two, when Tom Whistlewick who, without my observing it, had been taking a ramble, returned, a great deal more awake, and a great deal less tipsy.

'I say, Carmagnac, it is getting late, and I must go; I really must, for the reason I told you—and, Beckett, we must soon meet again.'

'I regret very much, monsieur, my not being able at present to relate to you the other case, that of another tenant of the very same room—a case more mysterious and sinister than the last—and which occurred in the autumn of the same year.'

'Will you both do a very good-natured thing, and come and dine with me, at the Dragon Volant, to-morrow?'

So, as we pursued our way along the *Galérie des Glacés*, I extracted their promise.

'By Jove!' said Whistlewick, when this was done; 'look at that pagoda, or sedan chair, or whatever it is, just where those fellows set it down, and not one of them near it! I can't imagine how they tell fortunes so devilish well. Jack Nuffles—I met him here to-night—says they are gipsies—where are they, I wonder? I'll go over and have a peep at the prophet.'

I saw him plucking at the blinds, which were constructed something on the principle of venetian blinds; the red curtains were inside; but they did not yield, and he could only peep under one that did not come quite down.

When he rejoined us, he related: 'I could scarcely see the old fellow, it's so dark. He is covered with gold and red, and has an embroidered hat on like a mandarin's; he's fast asleep; and, by

Jove, he smells like a pole-cat! It's worth going over only to have it to say. Fiew! pooh! oh! It is a perfume. Faugh!'

Not caring to accept this tempting invitation, we got along slowly toward the door. I bid them good-night, reminding them of their promise. And so found my way at last to my carriage; and was soon rolling slowly toward the Dragon Volant, on the loneliest of roads, under old trees, and the soft moonlight.

What a number of things had happened within the last two hours! what a variety of strange and vivid pictures were crowded together in that brief space! What an adventure was before me!

The silent, moonlighted, solitary road, how it contrasted with the many-eddied whirl of pleasure from whose roar and music, lights, diamonds and colours, I had just extricated myself.

The sight of lonely Nature at such an hour, acts like a sudden sedative. The madness and guilt of my pursuit struck me with a momentary compunction and horror. I wished I had never entered the labyrinth which was leading me, I knew not whither. It was too late to think of that now; but the bitter was already stealing into my cup; and vague anticipations lay, for a few minutes, heavy on my heart. It would not have taken much to make me disclose my unmanly state of mind to my lively friend, Alfred Ogle, nor even to the milder ridicule of the agreeable Tom Whistlewick.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PARC OF THE CHÂTEAU DE LA CARQUE.

There was no danger of the Dragon Volant's closing its doors on that occasion till three or four

in the morning. There were quartered there many servants of great people, whose masters would not leave the ball till the last moment, and who could not return to their corners in the Dragon Volant, till their last services had been rendered.

I knew, therefore, I should have ample time for my mysterious excursion without exciting curiosity by being shut out.

And now we pulled up under the canopy of boughs, before the sign of the Dragon Volant, and the light that shone from its hall-door.

I dismissed my carriage, ran up the broad staircase, mask in hand, with my domino fluttering about me, and entered the large bedroom. The black wainscoting and stately furniture, with the dark curtains of the very tall bed, made the night there more sombre.

An oblique patch of moonlight was thrown upon the floor from the window to which I hastened. I looked out upon the landscape slumbering in those silvery beams. There stood the outline of the Château de la Carque, its chimneys, and many turrets with their extinguisher-shaped roofs black against the soft grey sky. There, also, more in the foreground, about midway between the window where I stood, and the chateau, but a little to the left, I traced the tufted masses of the grove which the lady in the mask had appointed as the trysting-place, where I and the beautiful Countess were to meet that night.

I took 'the bearings' of this gloomy bit of wood, whose foliage glimmered softly at top in the light of the moon.

You may guess with what a strange interest and swelling of the heart I gazed on the unknown scene of my coming adventure.

But time was flying, and the hour already near. I threw my

robe upon a sofa; I groped out a pair of boots, which I substituted for those thin and heelless shoes, in those days called 'pumps,' without which a gentleman could not attend an evening party. I put on my hat, and lastly, I took a pair of loaded pistols which I had been advised were satisfactory companions in the then unsettled state of French society: swarms of disbanded soldiers, some of them alleged to be desperate characters, being everywhere to be met with. These preparations made, I confess I took a looking-glass to the window to see how I looked in the moonlight; and being satisfied, I replaced it, and ran downstairs.

In the hall I called for my servant.

'St. Clair,' said I; 'I mean to take a little moonlight ramble, only ten minutes or so. You must not go to bed until I return. If the night is very beautiful, I may possibly extend my ramble a little.'

So down the steps I lounged, looking first over my right, and then over my left shoulder, like a man uncertain which direction to take, and I sauntered up the road, gazing now at the moon, and now at the thin white clouds in the opposite direction, whistling, all the time, an air which I had picked up at one of the theatres.

When I had got a couple of hundred yards away from the Dragon Volant, my minstrelsy totally ceased; and I turned about, and glanced sharply down the road that looked as white as hoarfrost under the moon, and saw the gable of the old inn, and a window, partly concealed by the foliage, with a dusky light shining from it.

No sound of footstep was stirring; no sign of human figure in sight. I consulted my watch,

which the light was sufficiently strong to enable me to do. It now wanted but eight minutes of the appointed hour. A thick mantle of ivy at this point covered the wall and rose in a clustering head at top.

It afforded me facilities for scaling the wall, and a partial screen for my operations, if any eye should chance to be looking that way. And now it was done. I was in the park of the Château de la Carque, as nefarious a poacher as ever trespassed on the grounds of unsuspecting lord!

Before me rose the appointed grove, which looked as black as a clump of gigantic hearse-plumes. It seemed to tower higher and higher at every step; and cast a broader and blacker shadow toward my feet. On I marched, and was glad when I plunged into the shadow which concealed me. Now I was among the grand old lime and chestnut trees—my heart beat fast with expectation.

This grove opened, a little, near the middle; and in the space thus cleared, there stood with a surrounding flight of steps, a small Greek temple or shrine, with a statue in the centre. It was built of white marble with fluted Corinthian columns, and the crevices were tufted with grass; moss had shown itself on pedestal and cornice, and signs of long neglect and decay were apparent in its discoloured and weather-worn marble. A few feet in front of the steps a fountain, fed from the great ponds at the other side of the château, was making a constant tinkle and plashing in a wide marble basin, and the jet of water glimmered like a shower of diamonds in the broken moonlight. The very neglect and half ruinous state of all this made it only the prettier, as well as sadder. I was too intently watching for the

arrival of the lady, in the direction of the château, to study these things; but the half-noted effect of them was romantic, and suggested somehow the grotto and the fountain, and the apparition of Egeria.

As I watched a voice spoke to me, a little behind my left shoulder. I turned, almost with a start, and the masque, in the costume of Mademoiselle de la Vallière stood there.

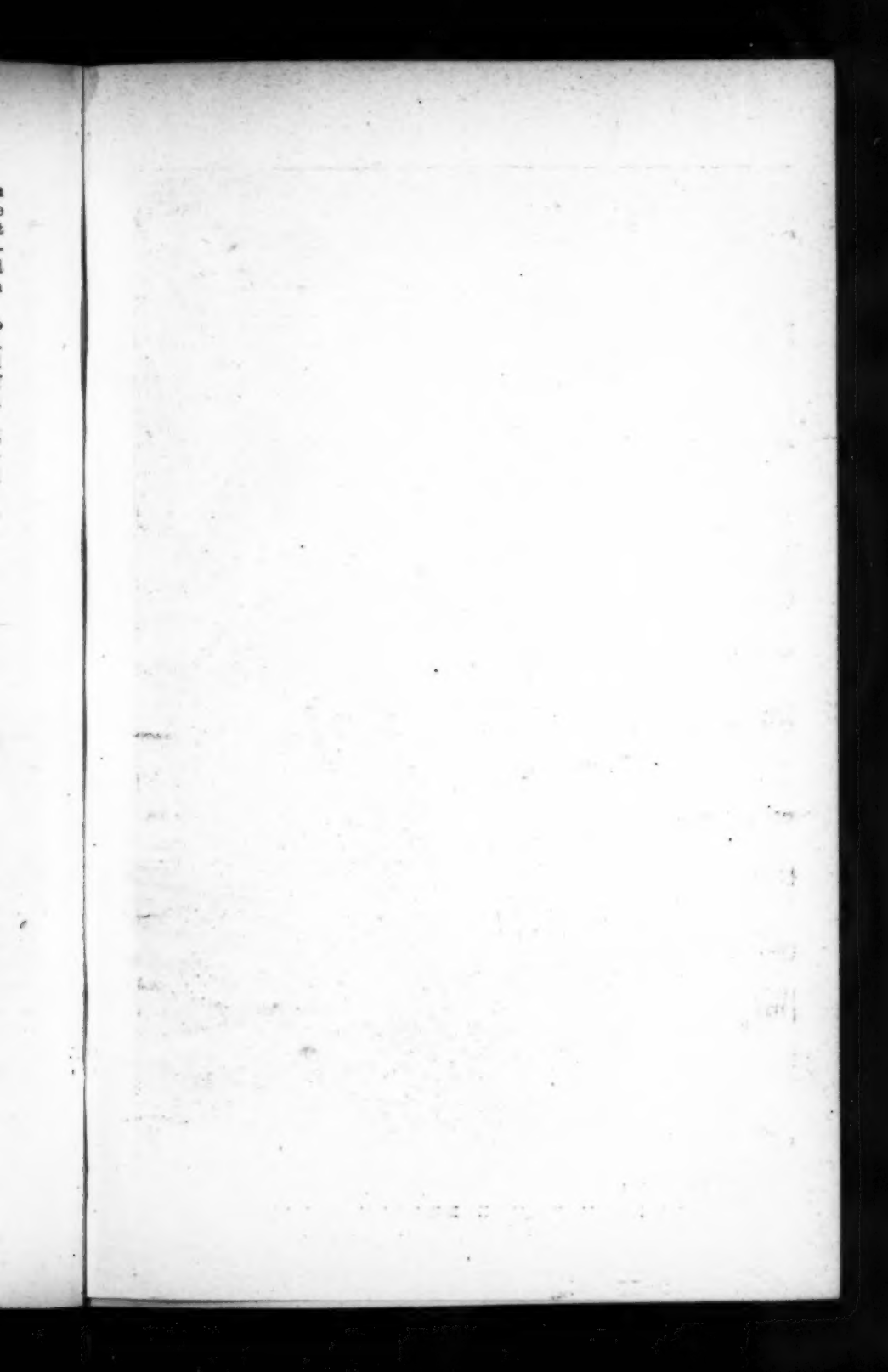
'The Countess will be here presently,' she said. The lady stood upon the open space, and the moonlight fell unbroken upon her. Nothing could be more becoming; her figure looked more graceful and elegant than ever. 'In the meantime I shall tell you some peculiarities of her situation. She is unhappy; miserable in an ill-assorted marriage, with a jealous tyrant who now would constrain her to sell her diamonds, which are——'

'Worth thirty thousand pounds sterling. I heard all that from a friend. Can I aid the Countess in her unequal struggle? Say but how, and the greater the danger or the sacrifice, the happier will it make me. Can I aid her?'

'If you despise a danger—which, yet, is not a danger; if you despise, as she does, the tyrannical canons of the world; and, if you are chivalrous enough to devote yourself to a lady's cause, with no reward but her poor gratitude: if you can do these things you can aid her, and earn a foremost place, not in her gratitude only, but in her friendship.'

At those words the lady in the mask turned away, and seemed to weep.

'I vowed myself the willing slave of the Countess. 'But,' I added, 'you told me she would soon be here.'





Drawn by J. A. Pasquier.]

THE ROOM IN THE DRAGON VOLANT.

'No, you must not do that ; we are not old enough friends yet.'

[See Page 303.]

is, if nothing unforeseen happen; but with the eye Count de St. Alyre in the end open, it is seldom safe

does she wish to see me?" I said, with a tender hesitation.

First, say have you really thought of her, more than once, since the adventure of the Belle Gîte?

"She never leaves my thoughts; day and night her beautiful eyes haunt me; her sweet voice is always in my ear."

"Mine is said to resemble hers," said the mask.

"So it does," I answered. "But is only a resemblance."

"Oh! then mine is better?"

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, I did not say that. Yours is a sweet voice, but I fancy a little higher."

"A little shriller, you would say," answered the De la Vallière, "and a good deal vexed."

"No, not shriller: your voice is not deep, it is beautifully sweet; but not so pathetically sweet as mine."

"That is prejudice, monsieur; it is not true."

"I bowed; I could not contradict a lady."

"I see, monsieur, you laugh at me; you think me vain, because I claim in some points to be equal to the Countess de St. Alyre. I challenge you to say, my hand, at least, is less beautiful than hers; when she thus spoke she drew her glove off, and extended her hand, which appeared, in the moonlight, like the lady seemed really melted."

"I was magnified and irritating; in this uninteresting competition the precious moments were passing, and my interview leading

to nothing."

"I will admit, then, that my hand is as beautiful as hers."

"I said about it, mademoiselle; I, with the honesty

of irritation. 'I will not enter into comparisons, but the Countess de St. Alyre is, in all respects, the most beautiful lady I ever beheld.'

The masque laughed softly, and then, more and more softly, said, with a sigh, 'I will prove all I say.' And as she spoke she removed the mask: and the Countess de St. Alyre, smiling, confessed, bashful, more beautiful than ever, stood before me!

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "How monstrously stupid I have been. And it was to Madame la Comtesse that I spoke for so long in the name of the mask!" I gazed on her in silence, and with a few sweet laughs of good nature, she extended her hand. I took it and carried it to my lips.

"Now, you must not do that," she said, smiling. "It is not the custom of French girls. I bid, although you were mademoiselle, that you do remember the Countess of the Belle Gîte, and that you are a champion true and fearless. Had you yielded to the claims just now pressed upon you by the rivalry of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, in her mask, the Countess de St. Alyre should never have trusted or seen you more. I now see even that you are true, as well as brave. You now know that I have not forgotten you; and, also, that if you would risk your life for me, I, too, would brave every danger, rather than lose my friend for ever. I have but a few moments more. Will you come here again to-morrow night, at a quarter past eleven? I will be here at that moment; you must without the most scrupulous care to prevent suspicion that you have come here, monsieur. Do you that is all."

She spoke these last words with the most pensive reticence.

I bowed again and again, and would do rather than promise her



Drawn by J. A. Cooper.

THE ROOM IN THE DRAGON VOLANT.

'No, you must not do that; we are not old enough friends yet.'

[See Page 203.]

'That is, if nothing unforeseen should happen; but with the eye of the Count de St. Alyre in the house, and open, it is seldom safe to stir.'

'Does she wish to see me?' I asked, with a tender hesitation.

'First, say have you really thought of *her*, more than once, since the adventure of the Belle Etoile.'

'She never leaves my thoughts; day and night her beautiful eyes haunt me; her sweet voice is always in my ear.'

'Mine is said to resemble hers,' said the mask.

'So it does,' I answered. 'But it is only a resemblance.'

'Oh! then mine is better?'

'Pardon me, mademoiselle, I did not say *that*. Yours is a sweet voice, but I fancy a little higher.'

'A little shriller, you would say,' answered the De la Vallière, I fancied a good deal vexed.

'No, not shriller: your voice is not shrill, it is beautifully sweet; but not so pathetically sweet as hers.'

'That is prejudice, monsieur; it is not true.'

I bowed; I could not contradict a lady.

'I see, monsieur, you laugh at me; you think me vain, because I claim in some points to be equal to the Countess de St. Alyre. I challenge you to say, my hand, at least, is less beautiful than hers.' As she thus spoke she drew her glove off, and extended her hand, back upward, in the moonlight.

The lady seemed really nettled. It was undignified and irritating; for in this uninteresting competition the precious moments were flying, and my interview leading apparently to nothing.

'You will admit, then, that my hand is as beautiful as hers.'

'I cannot admit it, mademoiselle,' said I, with the honesty

of irritation. 'I will not enter into comparisons, but the Countess de St. Alyre is, in all respects, the most beautiful lady I ever beheld.'

The masque laughed coldly, and then, more and more softly, said, with a sigh, 'I will prove all I say.' And as she spoke she removed the mask: and the Countess de St. Alyre, smiling, confused, bashful, more beautiful than ever, stood before me!

'Good heavens!' I exclaimed.

'How monstrously stupid I have been. And it was to Madame la Comtesse that I spoke for so long in the *salon*!' I gazed on her in silence. And with a low sweet laugh of good nature, she extended her hand. I took it, and carried it to my lips.

'No, you must not do that, she said, quietly; we are not old enough friends yet. I find, although you were mistaken, that you do remember the Countess of the Belle Etoile, and that you are a champion true and fearless. Had you yielded to the claims just now pressed upon you by the rivalry of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, in her mask, the Countess de St. Alyre should never have trusted or seen you more. I now am sure that you are true, as well as brave. You now know that I have not forgotten you; and, also, that if you would risk your life for me, I, too, would brave some danger, rather than lose my friend for ever. I have but a few moments more. Will you come here again to-morrow night, at a quarter past eleven? I will be here at that moment; you must exercise the most scrupulous care to prevent suspicion that you have come here, monsieur. *You owe that to me.*

She spoke these last words with the most solemn entreaty.

I vowed again and again, that I would die rather than permit the

least rashness to endanger the secret which made all the interest and value of my life.

She was looking, I thought, more and more beautiful every moment. My enthusiasm expanded in proportion.

'You must come to-morrow night by a different route,' she said; 'and if you come again, we can change it once more. At the other side of the Château there is a little churchyard, with a ruined chapel. The neighbours are afraid to pass it by night. The road is deserted there, and a stile opens a way into these grounds. Cross it and you can find a covert of thickets, to within fifty steps of this spot.'

I promised, of course, to observe her instructions implicitly.

'I have lived for more than a year in an agony of irresolution. I have decided at last. I have lived a melancholy life; a lonelier life than is passed in the cloister. I have had no one to confide in; no one to advise me; no one to save me from the horrors of my existence. I have found a brave and prompt friend at last. Shall I ever forget the heroic tableau of the hall of the Belle Etoile? Have you—have you really kept the rose I gave you, as we parted? Yes—you swear it. You need not; I trust you. Richard, how often have I in solitude repeated your name, learned from my servant. Richard, my hero! Oh! Richard! Oh, my king! I love you.'

I would have folded her to my heart—thrown myself at her feet. But this beautiful and—shall I say it—inconsistent woman repelled me.

'No, we must not waste our moments in extravagances. Understand my case. There is no such thing as indifference in the married state. 'Not to love one's husband,' she continued, 'is to hate him.

The Count, ridiculous in all else, is formidable in his jealousy. In mercy, then, to me observe caution. Affect to all you speak to, the most complete ignorance of all the people in the Château de la Carque; and, if any one in your presence mentions the Count or Countess de St. Alyre, be sure you say you never saw either. I shall have more to say to you to-morrow night. I have reasons that I cannot now explain, for all I do, and all I postpone. Farewell. Go! Leave me.'

She waved me back, peremptorily. I echoed her 'farewell,' and obeyed.

This interview had not lasted, I think, more than ten minutes. I scaled the park-wall again, and reached the Dragon Volant before its doors were closed.

I lay awake in my bed, in a fever of elation. I saw, till the dawn broke, and chased the vision, the beautiful Countess de St. Alyre, always in the dark, before me.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TENANT OF THE PALANQUIN.

The Marquis called on me next day. My late breakfast was still upon the table.

He had come, he said, to ask a favour. An accident had happened to his carriage in the crowd on leaving the ball, and he begged, if I were going into Paris, a seat in mine—I was going in, and was extremely glad of his company. He came with me to my hotel; we went up to my rooms. I was surprised to see a man seated in an easy chair, with his back toward us, reading a newspaper. He rose. It was the Count de St. Alyre, his gold spectacles on his nose; his black wig, in oily curls, lying close to his narrow head, and showing, like carved ebony

over a repulsive visage of boxwood. His black muffler had been pulled down. His right arm was in a sling. I don't know whether there was anything unusual in his countenance that day, or whether it was but the effect of prejudice arising from all I had heard in my mysterious interview in his park, but I thought his countenance was more strikingly forbidding than I had seen it before.

I was not callous enough in the ways of sin to meet this man, injured at least in intent, thus suddenly, without a momentary disturbance.

He smiled.

'I called, Monsieur Beckett, in the hope of finding you here,' he croaked, 'and I meditated, I fear, taking a very great liberty, but my friend the Marquis d'Harmonville, on whom I have perhaps some claim, will perhaps give me the assistance I require so much.'

'With great pleasure,' said the Marquis, 'but not till after six o'clock. I must go this moment to a meeting of three or four people, whom I cannot disappoint, and I know, perfectly, we cannot break up earlier.'

'What am I to do?' exclaimed the Count, 'an hour would have done it all. Was ever *contre-temps* so unlucky?'

'I'll give you an hour, with pleasure,' said I.

'How very good of you, monsieur, I hardly dared to hope it. The business, for so gay and charming a man as Monsieur Beckett, is a little *funeste*. Pray read this note which reached me this morning.'

It certainly was not cheerful. It was a note stating that the body of his, the Count's cousin, Monsieur de St. Amand, who had died at his house, the Château Clery, had been, in accordance with his written directions, sent

for burial at Père La Chaise, and, with the permission of the Count de St. Alysre, would reach his house (the Château de la Carque), at about ten o'clock on the night following, to be conveyed thence in a hearse, with any member of the family who might wish to attend the obsequies.

'I did not see the poor gentleman twice in my life,' said the Count, 'but this office, as he has no other kinsman, disagreeable as it is, I could scarcely decline, and so I want to attend at the office to have the book signed, and the order entered. But here is another misery. By ill luck, I have sprained my thumb, and can't sign my name for a week to come. However, one name answers as well as another. Yours as well as mine. And as you are so good as to come with me, all will go right.'

Away we drove. The Count gave me a memorandum of the christian and surnames of the deceased, his age, the complaint he died of, and the usual particulars; also a note of the exact position in which a grave, the dimensions of which were described, of the ordinary simple kind, was to be dug, between two vaults belonging to the family of St. Amand. The funeral, it was stated, would arrive at half-past one o'clock A.M. (the next night but one); and he handed me the money, with extra fees, for a burial by night. It was a good deal; and I asked him, as he entrusted the whole affair to me, in whose name I should take the receipt.

'Not in mine, my good friend. They wanted me to become an executor, which I, yesterday, wrote to decline; and I am informed that if the receipt were in my name it would constitute me an executor in the eye of the law, and fix me in that position. Take

it, pray, if you have no objection, in your own name.'

This, accordingly, I did.

'You will see, by-and-by, why I am obliged to mention all these particulars.'

The Count, meanwhile, was leaning back in the carriage, with his black silk muffler up to his nose, and his hat shading his eyes, while he dozed in his corner; in which state I found him on my return.

Paris had lost its charm for me. I hurried through the little business I had to do, longed once more for my quiet room in the Dragon Volant, the melancholy woods of the Château de la Carque, and the tumultuous and thrilling influence of proximity to the object of my wild but wicked romance.

I was delayed some time by my stockbroker. I had a very large sum, as I told you, at my banker's, uninvested. I cared very little for a few days' interest—very little for the entire sum, compared with the image that occupied my thoughts, and beckoned me with a white arm, through the dark, toward the spreading lime-trees and chestnuts of the Château de la Carque. But I had fixed this day to meet him, and was relieved when he told me that I had better let it lie in my banker's hands for a few days longer, as the funds would certainly fall immediately. This accident, too, was not without its immediate bearing on my subsequent adventures.

When I reached the Dragon Volant, I found, in my sitting-room, a good deal to my chagrin, my two guests, whom I had quite forgotten. I inwardly cursed my own stupidity for having embarrassed myself with their agreeable society. It could not be helped now, however, and a word to the waiters put all things in train for dinner.

Tom Whistlewick was in great force; and he commenced almost immediately with a very odd story.

He told me that not only Versailles, but all Paris, was in a ferment, in consequence of a revolting, and all but sacrilegious, practical joke, played off on the night before.

The pagoda, as he persisted in calling the palanquin, had been left standing on the spot where we last saw it. Neither conjuror, nor usher, nor bearers had ever returned. When the ball closed, and the company at length retired, the servants who attended to put out the lights, and secure the doors, found it still there.

It was determined, however, to let it stand where it was until next morning, by which time, it was conjectured, its owners would send messengers to remove it.

None arrived. The servants were then ordered to take it away; and its extraordinary weight, for the first time, reminded them of its forgotten human occupant. Its door was forced; and, judge what was their disgust, when they discovered, not a living man, but a corpse! Three or four days must have passed since the death of the burly man in the Chinese tunic and painted cap. Some people thought it was a trick designed to insult the Allies, in whose honour the ball was got up. Others were of opinion that it was nothing worse than a daring and cynical jocularly which, shocking as it was, might yet be forgiven to the high spirits and irrepressible buffoonery of youth. Others, again, fewer in number, and mystically given, insisted that the corpse was *bond fide* necessary to the exhibition, and that the disclosures and allusions which had astonished so many people were distinctly due to necromancy.

'The matter, however, is now in the hands of the police,' observed Monsieur Carmagnac, 'and we are not the body they were, two or three months ago, if the offenders against propriety and public feeling are not traced, and convicted, unless, indeed, they have been a great deal more cunning than such fools generally are.'

I was thinking within myself how utterly inexplicable was my colloquy with the conjuror, so cavalierly dismissed by Monsieur Carmagnac as a 'fool;' and the more I thought the more marvelous it seemed.

'It certainly was an original joke, though not a very clean one,' said Whistlewick.

'Not even original,' said Carmagnac. 'Very nearly the same thing was done, a hundred years ago or more, at a state ball in Paris; and the rascals who played the trick were never found out.'

In this Monsieur Carmagnac, as I afterwards discovered, spoke truly; for, among my books of French anecdote and memoirs, the very incident is marked, by my own hand.

While we were thus talking the waiter told us that dinner was served; and we withdrew accordingly; my guests more than making amends for my comparative taciturnity.

'OH WILLIE.'

THE slow wheel of the months revolving
 Brings another lingering year;
 Another winter's snow dissolving
 Tells that spring will soon be here.
 The busy birds will soon be mating
 In the branches overhead—
 Oh! Willie, it is weary waiting:
 When, oh! when shall we be wed!

Five long, long years have waned—how slowly!
 Since that evening in the grove
 When in mine ear you whispered lowly
 All your ardent tale of love.
 Can that love be now abating?
 Were those empty words you said?—
 Oh! Willie, it is weary waiting.
 When, oh! when shall we be wed!

No want, no toil shall bring me sorrow;
 My only grief is long delay:
 With you beside me, can to-morrow
 Dim the blisses of to-day?
 Hope strains against its prison grating;
 Let it go—bring Joy instead—
 Oh! Willie, it is weary waiting.
 When, oh! when shall we be wed!

FRENCH NOVELISTS.

NO. III.—HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

BALZAC is the king of French romancists, and will reign supreme in spite of Hugo, who has thrown the force of his life into poetry and politics. Balzac did no such foolishness: poetry was impossible to him, and politics mere trifles belonging to the events of the day. His dreams alone were real, and out of the teeming populace of phantoms which tenanted them he created the 'Comédie Humaine,' with its seven or eight departments, its five-and-forty volumes, or something over a hundred separate stories.

Balzac was incomprehensible as a child, and as a man he is the strangest union of splendid sanity and mad magic that Paris, great city of *bizarries*, can offer us. The comedy of his life might fill several volumes, and its mysteriousness would afford food for bewildered speculation that might extend to several more. If Balzac is too big to include in a single article, we must try and show a gleam of his wonderful eyes, or a picture of him at work in his study, a garret full of unmolested spiders.

Imaginative writers may be divided into two classes, those who compose under the influence of natural stimulants, and those who write under the influence of artificial stimulants. As there is a natural paradise which is the happiness of health, and an artificial paradise which is opium, so there are natural and artificial energies, owing to natural and artificial stimulants. He who makes a poem because he is in good health, or because he has been enjoying

fresh air and sunlight, or because he has seen something suggestive which acts upon him as an intellectual spur, is evolving natural energies under natural stimulant. He who whips a laggard brain into excited action by means of haschisch or absinthe, gin or champagne, green tea or black coffee, is evolving artificial energies under artificial stimulus. The question as to the relative qualities of work produced under natural impulse and artificial pressure appears to be not quite decided.

A work composed by an author of an exuberant vitality will possess a healthful glow that cannot fail to impress itself upon the reader and to give pleasure. On the other hand, a work produced under conditions of artificial excitement will manifest traces of such to the reader: it may produce in him an intensity of emotion which the work of a heartier and more comfortable writer might not be able to effect; but with all the pleasure that it gives there will probably be frequently co-existent a sense of strain, owing to the circumstances under which it is composed. The artificial interest may be more absorbing for the time: the natural will be more charming and more abiding.

Balzac worked under the influence of three stimulants; a genuine intellectual impulse being the first and natural one, while the artificial stimulants were an unendurable load of debt, which he bore the greater part of his life, for the one, and draughts of immensely strong *café noir* for the other.

His was by no means a laggard brain, but he loved to whip it into abnormal energy. He is like the engineer of a Mississippi steam-boat, which flies through the water at a marvellous rate under the pressure of an immensely powerful screw. Balzac is such an engineer, not content with the ordinary speed of his vessel, but cramming the furnace with pine and rosin, and plugging the safety-valve until the pressure of steam becomes dangerous. And the steam-boat is the mechanical part of Balzac's brain, his extraordinary power of will serving for furnace and engines.

Balzac was born at Tours in 1799. His father, a somewhat cold-blooded follower of Rabelais, looked upon him as he lay in the cradle, and said, 'It is not possible for me to be the father of a fool.'

The boy soon manifested mysterious traits of character, and in some things a wonderful precocity. He was unappreciated at school, and while there was rendered almost imbecile by reason of a shock inflicted upon his over-sensitive nerves. A metaphysical essay which he had composed on the power of the will, and had hidden in his box, was discovered and dragged to the light by a jeering schoolmaster, who was incapable of comprehending it, but quite capable of maddening such a boy with stinging ridicule.

He was a very singular boy, and imagined himself possessed by a familiar spirit. St. Theresa and Madame Guyon were a continuation of the Bible to him. His mother possessed all the works of Swedenborg, and the boy's delight was to take one of these volumes, and escape into the solitude of the woods, where he would pore over it for a whole day, supported only by a crust of bread.

Madame de Staël once found him thus, a little ragged boy with gleaming eyes and pale face, immersed in the contemplation of 'Heaven and Hell.'

Later in life he still retained his mysterious sentiment. At each difficulty overcome he kissed the soft hand of an imaginary being who had beautiful eyes, who was elegant and rich, and who was some day to stroke his head and say, tenderly, 'Thou hast suffered much, my poor angel.' And this man had the neck of a bull or an athlete, strong, masculine lips, and a mighty nose. 'Take care of my nose,' he said to a sculptor, to whom he was sitting for his bust; 'my nose is a world.'

M. Théophile Gautier presents us with a most interesting sketch of Balzac's manner of work, from which we translate some passages. The great novelist's debts were a torture to him; but when, seated before his table, in his monk's frock, in the midst of the silence of night, he found himself in the presence of the white sheets of paper, lit by the flame of his seven-candled lamp, concentrated by a green shade, in taking the pen he forgot everything; and then began a strife most terrible. In these fearful battles of the night, from which in the morning he came forth broken, but conqueror, when the extinguished ashes of the fire made chill the atmosphere of his chamber, his head smoked, and from his body exhaled a steam as from the bodies of horses in winter time. Often a single phrase occupied him a whole vigil: it was taken, retaken, twisted, kneaded, hammered, drawn out, shortened, written in a hundred different manners; whilst, strangely enough, the necessary and absolute form only presented itself after the exhaustion of the approximate forms; without doubt there were

occasions when the molten metal of his thought flowed with a jet that was fuller and less turgid, but there are very few pages of Balzac which have remained identical with the first rough draft. His manner of proceeding was this: when he had for a long time carried in his mind and lived a subject, with a rapid, rough, blotted, almost hieroglyphic caligraphy, he traced a kind of sketch in a few pages, which he sent to the printing-house, whence it returned in the form of placards—that is, of columns of letter-press printed in the middle of large leaves of paper. Balzac read carefully these placards, which gave already to his embryo work the impersonal character which is not possessed by manuscript, and then applied to this rough draught the high critical faculty which he possessed, as if the question had been of the work of some one else. He operated on something; with approval, or disapproval, he retained or corrected, but, above all, he made additions. Lines starting from the beginning, the middle, or the end of phrases, led towards the margins, on the right, on the left, above, below, conducting to developments, intercalations, epithets, adverbs. At the end of some hours of work, one would have called it a spray of fireworks, as drawn by a child. From the primitive text started rockets of style, which burst forth on all sides. Then there were crosses simple; crosses re-crossed, like those in heraldry; stars; suns; Arabian or Roman figures; Greek or French characters; all imaginable signs of reference came into one grand entanglement. Slips of paper, fastened with wafers, attached by pins, were added to the insufficient margins; stripes of lines in fine characters to help

to the place, and full themselves of erasures, for a correction scarcely made was already itself corrected. The printed sheet almost disappeared in the midst of this scrawl of cabalistic appearance, which the compositors passed from hand to hand, stipulating that they were not to do more than an hour each of Balzac.

The following day they would bring him back the sheets with the corrections made, that already increased them by one half. Balzac set to work again, amplifying always, adding a trait, a detail, a painting, an observation of manners, a characteristic word, an effective phrase, making the idea grasped more closely by the form, bringing himself always nearer to his interior impression, choosing, like a painter among several contours, the definitive line. Often, after having completed the terrible toil with that intensity of application of which he alone was capable, he perceived that the thought had become warped in the execution, that an episode predominated, that a figure which he had wished to be secondary for general effect projected beyond his plans; and with a stroke of the pen he erased courageously the result of four or five nights of labour. He was heroic in these casualties. Six, seven, and often ten, proofs went back to the printer erased, done over again, without satisfying the desire of the author for perfection. The great novelist kept changing his colours just like a painter does when he cannot get the effect he wishes. His powerful will seems to have acted in the place of patience.

Balzac endeavoured to instil the principles of his *régime* of life into his *confrères*, Gautier and others, who wrought with a diametrically opposite creed. They

were to immure themselves for two or three years, said Balzac; to drink only water; to eat soaked beans, like Protogenes; to go to bed at sunset and rise at midnight; to work until morn, and then employ the day in revising, expanding, amending, perfecting, and polishing the nocturnal work, in correcting proofs, taking notes, making the necessary studies, and living altogether in the most absolute chastity. He impressed these notions upon his friends with such earnestness that, after listening often, they at length made the experiment of arriving at genius this way. They rose several times at midnight, and after taking the inspiring coffee, made according to prescription, sat down before a table to work after the manner of Balzac. But, alas! sleep came upon them, and their heads and the table were soon glued together. Use had become second nature to Balzac. For a long, long time his daily food was three sous' worth of bread, two of milk, and three of sausage-meat. His lodging, a wretched garret, cost him also three sous, and the same amount was required for the midnight oil. Balzac's sole stimulant was coffee: tobacco, under every form, he anathematized, and dubbed those imbeciles who indulged in it. He gives vent to some of his spleen about it in his 'Théorie des Excitants;' and, in revenge, his biographer brings together a number of names to show that neither are smokers of necessity imbeciles to begin with; nor do they become imbeciles on account of their indulgence. Goethe and Henri Heine, we are told, did not smoke—and they were Germans, too: Byron smoked; Victor Hugo does not; nor did the late Alexandre Dumas; but, on the other hand, a long list can be pointed to, con-

taining Alfred de Musset, Eugène Sue, Madame Dudevant (Georges Sand), Merimée, Paul de Saint Victor, Emile Augier, Ponsard, who are or were smokers; to whom we may add the compiler himself, M. Théophile Gautier, who is not only fond of the weed, but has been a member of the celebrated club which had sittings for the quiet enjoyment of dawamesk, that elegant preparation of haschisch.

Balzac's life, which was one continued struggle against debt, and his nature, both conspired to make gold the important element of the world, as seen by him. Novelists before his time had endowed their heroes with a mystical lamp of Aladdin, which rendered all sordid cares unnecessary. Balzac, on the other hand, in the 'Peau de Chagrin,' makes a lover disturbed not only to know if he has moved the heart of the beloved one, but whether he has money enough to pay for their cab-hire home. Among his other wonderful acquirements Balzac had a great capacity for calculation, and for comprehending large operations of finance. These he introduced abundantly into his novels, where, in a time when finance did not occupy so conspicuous a position in the world at large as it does to-day, they gave rise to numerous discussions and calculations amongst grave commercial readers. He could make the plainest things interesting by elaboration and graphic depiction of detail. He would bestow as much pains upon the most minute circumstances of the most sordid life as upon the delineation of the character of his most elevated heroine. Nothing was too great or too small for his pen. Balzac's novel 'Le Peau de Chagrin' brought him in some money, and he immediately turned his

little rooms into boudoirs hung with silk and lace. At this time he carried the wonderful walking-stick which has so often been heard of. 'Was it really a walking-stick?' asks Madame de Girardin. 'What an enormous walking-stick! To what giant does such a big walking-stick belong? A sort of club formed of turquoises, gold, and marvellous chisellings; and behind all that two large black eyes (the owner's) more brilliant than precious stones.' This walking-stick Balzac was wont to take with him to the opera, and exhibit conspicuously in front of his box.

At this proud period of his life he met with Georges Sand, who was his junior in literature. She brings out, with a marvellous vividness, the salient points in a most incomprehensible character. This is her description of him: 'Puerile and powerful, always envious of a *bibelot*, and never jealous of a glory; sincere to modesty, boasting to lies, confident in himself and in others, very expansive, very good, and very foolish, with an inward sanctuary of reason into which he retired that he might reign supreme in his work; cynical in chastity, drunk in drinking water, intemperate in work, and sober in all other passions, positive and romantic to equal excess, credulous and sceptical, full of contrasts and of mysteries, such was Balzac.' An anecdote which Madame Sand relates of him is also very characteristic of his capricious carelessness, and dreaminess: 'One evening when, in a strange manner, we had dined with Balzac (I think that the dinner was composed of poiled beef, a melon, and champagne), he went to put on a fine new dressing-gown, on purpose to show it to us, with all the pride of a young girl; and thus arrayed,

and with a candlestick in his hand, he insisted on accompanying us as far as the railing of the Luxembourg. It was late, the place was deserted, and I observed to him that he might be assassinated on his way home. "Not at all," said he, "if I meet thieves they will take me for a madman, and they will be afraid of me; or for a prince, and they will respect me." It was a fine calm night. He accompanied us thus, carrying his wax candle alight in a pretty silver-gilt, chiselled candle-stick, and talking of four Arab horses, which he had not then, which he would have soon, which he never has had, and which, for some time, he firmly believed he had. He would have reconducted us to the other end of Paris, had we allowed him to do so.'

At this time he was famous enough to be able to make money, although he had not enough to pay off his enormous load of debt. At the time of his extreme poverty, when volume after volume was published only to fall flat before an unappreciative public, and his garret was very bare of furniture, this faculty which he possessed, of making real and vivid the dreams of his imagination, proved of great service to him. When he looked round his sordid little room, no broken-down furniture or cobwebbed walls met his eyes, but he saw the room as it was in his visions, full of costly ornament, hangings of silk, pillars of marble, and fittings of scented woods and of gold. A marvellous faculty, a useful one, could we but gain possession of it.

There was a peculiarity about Balzac's dreams; they were so absolutely real to him that they impressed others with a feeling of reality, and indeed there was the evidence of so keen an instinct accompanying them, that it was

impossible to say that they might not be real. At one time he wrote a story, the history of a noble Venetian, who, having been made prisoner in the well of the ducal palace, had fallen, while making a subterranean passage in order to effect his escape, upon the secret treasure of the republic, of which he had brought a large portion away with him with the aid of a gaoler whom he had won over. As the story ran, its hero, Facino Cane, having become blind, had still kept the gift of second sight, and he offered to the author to guide him towards that immense hoard of wealth, if he would but pay his expenses for the journey. Balzac seemed to identify himself with Facino Cane, and worked out a plan with such fineness of detail and apparent truthfulness—believing in it in his way, himself, we must remember—that he shortly made others share his conviction. They were to share the profits, and picks and proper tools for disinterring the treasure were to be procured, with which they were to start according to his directions. Unfortunately, money failed these possessors of enthusiastic brains—the money wherewith they were to have paid their passage; and, in time, the excitement wore off. Another reality of Balzac's imagination possessed a sounder foundation in fact. His dream was of some silver mines in Sardinia which had been abandoned by the Romans, and he thought that after being treated by the imperfect processes of olden times, the refuse would still contain a sufficient quantity of metal to make its working remunerative. The idea proved a just one, but it was rashly told, and made the fortune of some one who was not Balzac. In his enthusiasm he had borrowed money, and started at once for Sardinia. While on board the vessel

which was taking him thither, he imparted to the captain his idea. He procured samples from the mines, and returned to Paris to have them tested. They were found to contain silver, and Balzac then applied to the Sardinian government for authority to make excavations. Alas for genius, business had outwitted it, and the concession had been already made to the treacherous captain.

At Balzac's house, we learn from M. Gautier, upon the shelves of a book-case, composed of his own works alone, was to be seen each different proof of the same work bound in a separate volume, from the first sketch to the completed book. Near these volumes was a volume of sinister physiognomy, bound in black morocco, without clasps or gilding. By its side was a copy of the well-known 'Contes Drôlatiques,' but the title of the mysterious black volume itself is unknown to fame. It was lettered 'Comptes Melancoliques,' and contained the list of Balzac's ancient debts, expired bills, memoranda, and all the *débris* of a series of complicated accounts. This was just Balzac's humour. The 'Comptes Melancoliques' had absorbed as definite a share of his life as the 'Contes Drôlatiques';—why then should they not be treated as handsomely? If we want to produce a complete picture of our life, by all means let us have our tradesmen's bills bound in morocco by the side of the works of our imagination. Why not put the real and the ideal side by side? Balzac did so, but the real appears to have been ideal to him, and the ideal real.

When Balzac had gained some income from his works he bought a little estate called *Les Jardies*, on the road from Sèvres to Ville d'Avray. Of course he immedi-

ately began a new series of his usual castles-in-the-air with regard to this property. He was going to plant vines of a peculiarly fine quality; he would grow pine-apples in enormous profusion, which he would sell in Paris at five francs each instead of the ordinary price of a louis. He calculated on a gain of five hundred thousand francs from this project. A shop was to have been rented in Paris for the exclusive sale of this remarkably-grown fruit. The sign-board was to contain nothing but these words: 'Pine-apples from the Jardies.' Alas! Balzac's nostril had opened wide to an imaginary breath of tropical air which was to be the food of his pine-apples; and one day the snow fell silently on the beds where they were to have grown, taking away the dream of southern climes and of profit from the pine-apples at a blow.

On this piece of land he had a house built after his own designs. Its architecture, therefore, partook more of the nature of that practised in dreamland than of the sober characteristics of earthly builders. When the house, consisting of large airy rooms, commanding a view of the surrounding country, was finished, one of the masons chanced to suggest to Balzac the question as to where the staircase was to be placed. Alas! a staircase had not entered into Balzac's dreams, and, consequently, there had been no part of the building prepared for its reception. But Balzac's mind rose to the emergency. 'Since the staircase is inclined to master me in my own house,' said he, 'I will turn it out of doors.' This he did, and it is, doubtless, to this house, that Gantier makes allusion when he says that it offered an architectural disposition of an extremely singular kind, for one had

to enter it a little after the fashion that wine enters bottles. The entrance door was at the top of the house, and it was necessary to descend three stages to arrive at the first floor. The furniture of the house, too, was as singular as its architecture. It was magnificent, in a way. In one place were wainscotings of violet ebony, in another tapestries from the Gobelins, in another Venetian glass; here were adornments of Parian marble, there was a pedestal of cedar, above, a ceiling painted by Delacroix, below, a carpet of Aubusson; to one room doors like those of Trianon, to another a mosaic floor, inlaid with all the rarest woods of the isles. But alas! all this was but ideal, and the places of these splendid articles of furniture were but indicated by their names being inscribed in charcoal upon the walls which were bare or covered with grey paper. M. Léon Gozlan, an intimate friend of Balzac's, being his guest one day, took charcoal himself, and wrote upon the stucco in larger characters than marked the places of the other ornaments: 'Here is a picture by Raphael, *beyond all price, and such as the world has never yet seen.*' Balzac, in his garret years before, had been able so completely to invest even its scanty squalid furniture with an ideal aspect proceeding from his own dreamland, that his chimeras were now too deeply rooted for his friend's pleasantry to excite in him anything else but laughter. Is then the world of imagination just as real as the world of fact? To natures so constituted as to be able to accept it as such, certainly it is; but here we are verging on Berkeleyism and must stop before we become too metaphysical.

Balzac's furniture was magnificent, though imaginary. The tea

which he offered to his friends at his social board was equally *récherché*, and possessed, in addition, some foundation in fact. His tea and his coffee—not to name the *onion purée*, made after his receipt, and possessing virtues both hygienic and symbolic—were exquisitely fine, and the admiration of his friends. This tea, we learn, fine as Latakiah snuff, yellow as Venetian gold, was never given to the profane. It was necessary to submit to a species of initiation before enjoying the right to taste it. It was kept in a precious box, like a relic, and enveloped in silken paper covered with hieroglyphics. Whilst unfolding the paper which contained it, Balzac would always begin to tell its history. The sun did not ripen it, except for the Emperor of China. First-class mandarins were appointed, by a privilege of birth, to water it and to nurture it when growing. Young girls, virgins, gathered it before sunrise, and singing carried it to the feet of the Emperor of China. This enchanted tea was only produced in one sacred province in China, and this sacred province only supplied a few pounds of it for the use of his imperial Majesty and the eldest sons of his august house. By special grace, the Emperor of China, on his gift-days, sent some rare handfuls of it to the Emperor of Russia. From his minister had Balzac obtained his precious store, and the last quantity Von Humboldt had supplied him with. Balzac's wines, too, had wonderful histories attached to them, each bottle possessing its own. This Bordeaux had been three times round the world; this rum came from a cask that had been tossed more than a century by the sea, and which had had to be cut open with an axe, the madrepores and seaweeds had grown so thick about it. To sit

at Balzac's table and listen to these stories, told with serious air and every appearance of reality, must have been a sore trial of the risible faculties. He believed in the personages who peopled his romances in just as absolute a manner. A friend of his addressed him one day on the subject of some individual then living. 'Let us talk of realities, rather,' said Balzac; 'what do you think of Eugénie Grandet?' Eugénie Grandet was the heroine of one of his novels. This was by no means affectation on Balzac's part: the world he had peopled with his array of moving characters was the essentially real world to him. A person once imagined by him became no longer the creation of his own brain, but a living reality that he might speak well or ill of, just as freely as of any persons who might be seen around him.

And the man of these mysterious eccentricities, these even childish crotchets and exaggerations, is the greatest novelist of France—is the author of the grand plan of the '*Comédie Humaine*,' containing so many living creatures, that he is styled by one of his biographers—as Alexandre Dumas, with his fondness for a sensational *mot*, styled Shakspeare—the man who has created most after God.'

Balzac became known and looked up to with a certain comic awe by the populace of Paris as a great original. When he had wandered, as his manner was, through woods and fields and roads for the whole of the night, and had stepped into a public conveyance to return, he would find himself, as a matter of ordinary occurrence, wholly destitute of coin. The driver, knowing the strange figure with disordered dress and, possibly, only in slippers, to be Balzac, was proud to convey him

without receiving a sous. When he travelled abroad—as he often did to verify the most trifling particular which he might be introducing into one of his romances—some money, of course, was necessary. His mode of paying the postilions in a country where he knew neither the language nor the tariffs, is thoroughly characteristic of him. ‘I did not know a word of the language of the country,’ says he, ‘nor did I know the value of its current coin, but I do know the human heart, which is the same in all countries, and I understand physiognomy; so this is what I did: I had a bag which I filled with small silver money, and each time that the horses were to be changed, I took this bag in my hand; the postilion then came to the door of the carriage; I looked searchingly into his eyes while I dropped into his hand one coin—two coins—then three—four, or ever so many, until at last I saw him smile. Now as soon as I saw him smile, I understood that I had given him a coin too many. Quickly I withdrew that coin, and my man was paid.’ This anecdote shows us Balzac as he was—possessing the simplicity of a child united with the profoundest insight and the deepest philosophy. But in small things wisdom is apt to overreach itself; and we fear that if he had tried a second time this original mode of settling the score, our worthy postilion—supposing him to be equal in wit to the ordinary run of his class—would have refrained from smiling for an unconscionable time.

Balzac is styled, and very justly, the Realist of Romance; he might with equal justice be called the Spiritualist of Romance. Those who would learn with what cruel candour he can expose the depravity of the human heart should

read his description of the two daughters in ‘Daddy Goriot.’ These are much more basely ungrateful than the daughters of King Lear; and, as some one has remarked, there is no Cordelia in Balzac’s story to relieve the darkness of the picture. But he does not care to do away with the sombre expressions of life: they constitute for him literary food just as satisfactory as the bright pictures. He has been described as a man standing before a beautiful mirror by which he could see a spot upon his face, and who would be content to admire the beauty of the mirror without removing the spot it had shown him. It was so with his regard of life. He accepted life as it was, and described it as he found it. He was an artist and not a moralist. Those who would seek that element in his works which is in the greatest degree opposed to his hard and sometimes tedious realism, should read the mystical story called ‘Séraphita,’ where we seem to breathe a strange atmosphere as from another world. In ‘Louis Lambert’ may be found many details of his early life, and in ‘Facino Cane,’ of his later experiences. A work that attracted much attention, especially from the sex to which it refers, is his ‘Woman of Thirty.’ Balzac showed that a woman at that age need not consider herself upon the shelf, but might be just as attractive as her younger and, consequently, envied sisters. Naturally, the women of thirty flocked to discover Balzac’s receipt.

Any one who has a few years to spare would find plenty of employment in a life of Balzac. There are abundant materials for such a work; and we should thence learn what a strange mortal the man was. He lived for very many years the life of a hermit, undergoing such

privations and disappointments as would have broken the 'back of most men. He lived quite a life of his own, making, in fact, a world of his own imaginations to live in. And his imaginations were so vividly real. He copied no one for the characters of his novels; but when he saw any one that he desired to embody in a volume, he seemed to live the life of his hero and to enter into all the plans of life of such a character, whether workman or prince, just as if they were his own. His humour was often childish and yet always irresistible; and his eloquence had a marvellously seductive effect upon the minds of his hearers.

Balzac was a magician, and even the strongest brains were subject to his fascination.

The being who was to say to him, 'Thou hast suffered much, my good angel,' came at last. She was a Russian lady, and was passionately adored by Balzac, who, before he married, had attained fame and power. He lived to enjoy the results of those long hard years of night-long toil and rigid economy, but for a short time only. He died in 1850; and the news of his death fell like a blow upon all Paris. He lies in Père la Chaise; and the one word, 'Balzac,' is inscribed upon his tomb.



A SLIGHT MIS-UNDERSTANDING.

LIFE'S APRIL.

SWEET soul—blithe April verging towards the May,
 Whose shadows speed
 O'er blossomed mead
 Chased by the light of variable day !

Thou hast a beauty that is more than fair.
 Where the wren sings,
 Thee on their wings
 Breezes from out the thickets seem to bear.

Soft, changeful airs that, coming, seem to go,
 So light they pass,
 As dew from grass
 Ere silver suns have cast their golden glow.

The pauseless flutter of a ruffled pool
 Breaks o'er thy face,
 To pass in grace
 Where every tiny wave sinks calm and cool.

No heat, no flame, but a mild lambent light
 Plays round thy words,
 Till, like struck chords,
 Our answering hearts go singing in thy sight.

Thy smiles glance out like sparkles on the snows,
 Or rays that cross
 The dew-touched moss
 That comes so fresh and fair before the rose.

Thy tears, that start so quick, that flow so free,
 Seem poured by grief
 For her relief
 Because cold sorrow hath no hold on thee.

Ah ! who would see thee other than thou art ?
 Who downward bring
 The quivering wing,
 The eddying dance of the untrammelled heart ?

Spare her, thou World ! Brush not the down which lies
 So soft, so light :
 In time's despite,
 Leave that unconscious soul within her eyes !

E. L. H.



LIFE'S APRIL

LIFE'S APRIL.

SWEET mid-march April verging towards the May,
 Whose shadows speed
 O'er blossomed mead
 Glowed by the light of variable day!

Thou hast a beauty that is more than fair,
 Where the wren sings,
 Thence on their wings
 Breezes from out the thickets seem to bear.

Soft, changeful airs that, coming, seem to go,
 So light they pass,
 As dew from grass
 Ere silver suns have cast their golden glow.

The pauseless flatter of a wadded peak
 Bends over thy face,
 To cool in green
 Waves every little shadow calm and cool.

Revered, yet bright, as a mild lambent light
 Shines round thy words,
 Like struck chords,
 The answering notes go singing in thy sight.

It rocks glows out like sparkles on the snows,
 Or rays that cross
 The dew-touched moss
 That comes so fresh and fair before the rose.

Thy tears that start so quick, that flow so free,
 Seem poured by grief
 For her relief
 Because cold sorrow hath no hold on thee.

Ah! who would see thee other than thou art?
 Who downward bring
 The quivering wing
 The eddying dance of the untrammelled heart?

Spare her, dear World! Brush not the down which lies
 So soft, so light:
 In time's despite,
 Leave that unconscious soul within her eyes!

E. L. H.



LIFE'S APRIL.



CRICKET REFORM.

BY AN OLD BATSMAN.

THERE are always a few enthusiasts who never have enough of their favourite occupation, but who begin it earlier and leave it off later than the rest of the world. They are to be found in almost every circle. Fox-hunters, who having killed their last May fox, rush off to the nearest otter hounds and stay with them till cub-hunting begins; shooting-men, who, having killed their last snipe, wile away the time with rabbits and pigeons till the happy twelfth comes round again; and fishermen, who will angle for perch or gudgeon when they cannot get salmon or trout. If men of this character are cricketers they probably put away their bats in the middle of October and take them out of their cupboard early in March. But, for our part, we think early and late cricket is a sorry amusement. In the commencement of the season the ground is wet and heavy, the bat stings the hand, and the ball seems to have an abnormal power of hurting. There is very little sun and a great deal of east wind; and, though perhaps on the day of your opening match it does not snow, yet you have the uncomfortable feeling of being threatened with a violent cold during the whole time you are fielding out. There are some who will brave even such inconveniences as these, and will pursue their favourite pastime in spite of all obstacles, but for the majority of the cricketing world the season has not yet begun. At the universities, indeed, some of the grounds have been opened, and no little practice goes on, especially among such as have a reputation

to make, but the cricket at this early period of the year is seldom good and the best players rarely take part in it.

The coming season opens under somewhat unusual circumstances. The end of the past year was rendered remarkable by a controversy, an agitation or a discussion—call it which you will—as to the necessity, or the absence of any necessity for cricket reform; and the columns of ‘Bell’s Life’ were, for several weeks, occupied with letters for or against change. We confess to having been disappointed with these letters; there never was yet a discussion carried on in a newspaper in which the controversialists did not devote themselves to pointing out rather the folly of their antagonists’ views than the wisdom of their own; but in the discussion to which we have alluded, there was such a marked tendency with the writers to lose sight of the real question in irrelevant retorts, that the least possible weight is to be attached to the whole correspondence. If, however, it does nothing else, it suffices to show that the idea has gained ground that cricket is not necessarily the unchangeable game which some of its admirers make it out to be, and that reform would now no longer be so entirely unpopular and impossible as it would have been some years ago.

About eighteen months ago, in the number of ‘London Society’ for November, 1870, we took occasion to express our opinion that the scores made at cricket had become too high, that the relative position of the batsman and the bowler had become greatly modi-

fied by various circumstances, and that some change was necessary to restore the equilibrium of the game. We have no desire to repeat all we said on that occasion, but it will be not out of place if, before speaking of the development of the views which we then put forward, we glance briefly at the arguments which we then used.

It is a point which disinterested spectators of cricket as a national amusement cannot have failed to remark that—especially during the last few years—there has been every year a change, and a considerable change, in the names of the gentlemen players who take part in first-class matches. Men who play actively one year, and are seen or heard of on all the great occasions, find the next year that the calls of business life are too resistless to allow them to devote so much time as cricket requires to any one amusement. Working men, and there are few nowadays who are not so in some capacity or other, can hunt and fish and shoot, but find too much time is necessary for cricket. Appealing to instances in 1870, we asked how often we saw in flannels gentlemen like Daniel, Lyttelton, Evans, Voules, who were, but a short time previously, to be found in all the principal matches. Similarly, at the present time, we might point to the comparatively small number of times which Mr. Dale, Mr. Green, and Mr. Pauncefoot, played in 1871, as compared with 1870. And if the statement were not admitted without example, might mention many others who find that cricket is a game which they must give up when sterner duties demand attention.

We then went on to say that the individual innings were too

long, and that neither the batsman cared to get more than a hundred, nor did the spectator care to see one performer displaying his skill for an egregious space of time. It is pleasanter, we thought, to get 30 or 40 runs in a bowler's match than to get one of the huge sensational innings which are so famous till they are eclipsed by something more unwieldy. And it is pleasanter to see a close finish where every run tells, and every balance of power between the outside and the inside causes excitement, than to look on at fourer after fourer, or maiden after maiden, and wonder how it is possible that the batsman should ever get out.

Examining how some alteration could be made in the laws to meet the difficulty we went through, in detail, the changes which had been suggested. We rejected the proposal to have a heavier ball, as it would be if dangerous to the wicket then dangerous to the batsman, and if not dangerous to the batsman then not dangerous to the wicket. For a similar reason we rejected the proposal to shorten the distance between the wickets, and thereby give the bowler the advantage which he often assumes in practice. We considered that the suggestion made by a well-known cricketer, under whose auspices a famous body of vagrants have so often been led to victory, that the popping crease might be brought nearer the wicket, would cramp the batsman's play, and only have any effect by spoiling the beauty of a principal part of the game. We rejected throwing on the same score that we rejected a heavier ball, and we thought that any alteration in the law of leg before wicket, which would provide for a man's being given out, if the ball which was stopped by his leg

would have hit the wicket, would but increase the umpires' already great responsibility, and add to the discontent already felt in too many instances at umpires' decisions. And we finally inclined to some diminution in the size of the bat, or increase in the size of the stumps as the way which would best restore the relative equality of batsman and bowler.

In all the letters which have been written since the subject came before the epistolary part of the cricketing world, no suggestion of much importance has been made of any change in the conditions of the game other than the above, and calculated to effect in a better way the improvement which we maintained was necessary. And we therefore think that no apology is due to our readers at the present time for having recapitulated the modes by which an improvement in the bowler's position might be effected. It now becomes necessary to turn our attention to the question, whether we were, in the first instance, right in thinking that the power of the batsman over the bowler ought to be diminished.

And in doing so we would begin by addressing ourselves to the '*laudatores temporis acti*,' who argue that twenty-five years ago men batted as well as they do now, and that for the simple reason that the bowling was better the scores were less; and who say that bowlers have only themselves to blame for their own failures, and would be able to prevent at least the monster innings if they only took pains and practised with the assiduity of old Lillywhite or the headwork of old Clarke? There is much to be said in favour of this point of view. To commence at the beginning of a cricketer's career, we find that at all the great public schools the boys em-

ploy professional bowlers to bowl to them. Having some practice means almost universally with youthful amateurs being bowled to by a paid bowler or some good-natured friend who does not consider that he is practising at all. Except in matches no attention whatever is paid to bowling, and when it is done, it is done carelessly, at the wrong distance, hurriedly, or without zeal. The same thing may be said about the village players from whose ranks the professional elevens are ultimately recruited. One and all seize the bat directly they can, and regard the privilege of being bowled to as the reward of success. Batting is the principal object of play, the batsman is always 'in,' the bowler is always 'out.' To a certain extent this is, in the nature of things, unavoidable. The feats of a batsman in practice are all the more effective, and therefore all the more satisfactory to himself and conducive to his own glory, from the fact that they are not tested or controlled by the presence of eleven fieldsmen. Many a hit that goes clean off the bat and provokes the applause of spectators, if there be any, and in any case fills the performer's soul with triumph, would be stopped, if not caught, were there eleven men in their proper places. This, of course, tells equally against the bowler. However zealously and keenly he may bowl, he has little or no chance of success except by hitting the wicket. He has no fields to help him, he cannot practice bowling for a catch, and, even if he does bowl a man out, the stumps are set up again and nothing more is done to mark his victory. It is therefore to a certain extent necessary that batting, and not bowling, should, in practice, be the popular department of the game, and that this popularity of

one as compared with the other should tell enormously in a match. But, at the same time, we think that more attention might be paid by young players to bowling, and that the captains of public school elevens and heads of village clubs could do very much, by recommending and encouraging painstaking practice of bowling, to develop that part of the game.

Again, when we come to maturer cricketers and to matches even of the highest order, we find that there is more attention paid to batting than bowling, and that they have therefore some truth on their side who blame the bowlers for the unsatisfactory superiority of the batsmen. How seldom is bowling really laboriously practised—practised with even half the care and enthusiasm devoted to batting? How many men do more than bowl as fast as they can and as straight as they can? And in matches, how many are there who do more than hammer away at the wicket, and trust to the chapter of accidents rather than to their own skill?

And as regards this we would notice one point which is we think not without importance. The habit of recording the number of maiden overs bowled, and the unreasoning applause which is often bestowed at the Oval and elsewhere on a man who bowls a succession of maidens, has a direct tendency to encourage bowlers to deliver a series of straight balls, rather short pitched not hard to get away, with no possible result except to give the batsman a sight of the ball, which is sure to become cruelly effective when the bowler gets a little tired and his deliveries a little inaccurate. As an instance of this, Willsher in the North and South Match at Canterbury began in the first innings of the North by bowling on a perfect wicket 15

maidens to Mr. Dale and Lockwood. Both batsmen played him with the utmost ease, and their scores of 64 and 51 showed how good a sight they got of the ball. The fact that Jupp kept wicket without a longstop speaks volumes for the accuracy of the veteran's bowling. Cricketers, especially professionals, play immensely for reputation; and if they are praised for bowling maiden overs they will go on trying to do so, and the inevitable result would be that the batting will become further developed and the scores larger.

These considerations, we say, tell in favour of the men who declare that no change is necessary except more painstaking among the bowlers; and we shall, perhaps, have something more to say, later, as to this point of view. But they have not exhausted the question. Batting, being the department of the game which as we have said is, both in practice and in matches, the easiest tested, and of which the actual value is most easily recorded, is the most followed up. And the result has been that it has made marvellous strides. We do not believe that the bowling is worse than it was—we even think it is better, and that the balls now bowled by Wootton, Emmett, Freeman, Shaw, and Willsher, are, *per se*, as difficult as those bowled by the great heroes of the time of Lord Frederic and Alfred Mynn. But batting has increased in much greater proportion. Where one man could bat twenty-five years ago ten can bat now. This is due to the natural development of the game, and the increased facilities which country players have of seeing good play. But it is also due—and on this we would dwell with the greatest possible force—to the improvement in the grounds. Cricket is no longer played in a field, but on

grounds carefully and scientifically prepared. Every year is growing greater the disinclination of men to play except on good wickets. And every year the general improvement in the ground is becoming more widespread. This change has even now totally altered the conditions of the game. The bowler has not one half the chances of defeating the batsman's skill as he had twenty or even ten years ago. Thus you have increasing skill acting reciprocally on increasing facility for skill, in batting. How, then, can you wonder that there is no bowler who does not, sometimes, show signs of despair? If, then, the equilibrium between batting and bowling was right fifteen years ago, it cannot be right now, because it has been changed by the progress of circumstances which we have pointed out.

And now let us turn from the old-school cricketers to the men who argue that the game is almost perfect as it is, and that no change is wanted either by the spectators, by the gentlemen players, or by the professionals. This case was well stated in an article in 'Land and Water,' called forth by our remarks of the year before last. 'In whose interest,' it was said, 'does "London Society" want to make a change at all? It must be either in that of the players in the game or the spectators. Do the men who play in a first-class match generally want the game shortened? We saw a good deal of good cricket in the late exceptionally hot summer, and yet we cannot remember to have heard a complaint from any good amateur, except one. . . . With the players the case is different. No doubt they do get stale and weary, and would be glad if the wickets fell faster . . . but any plan by which the game is materially shortened,

would restrict grand matches to a day and a half . . . and the funds would fall off accordingly, and then fewer matches would be played, or the emoluments of the players be lowered. If the players were put into the dilemma of having to choose between the present system and one in which they were to get shorter play and shorter pay, we venture to prophesy that they would prove stern conservatives.'

It is pleasant to find an objection put so candidly and so courteously; and if we do not agree with the above criticisms, we cannot but admit their fairness. We think, however, that it is by no means sure that no amateurs would be glad if the game was shorter. The satisfaction of getting over 100 runs is, to a good player who has done it more than once, not nearly so great as that of getting 30 or 40 at a critical time. Even Mr. Grace's extraordinary performances were, we venture to say, not so much a source of pleasure to him as smaller innings were to men who have by them pulled a match out of the fire. And, as regards the spectators, we assert most confidently that a close match with short scores is infinitely preferable to a huge run-getting affair where the batsmen have it all their own way. There are men who like sensational scenes, and are immensely pleased at having an opportunity of saying, 'I saw Mr. Hadow get 217, or, Mr. Grace get 268,' and these men would be equally pleased if they saw a man get 500, because their object is purely 'hugeness' and superiority. But there is, we are confident, scarcely a good judge of the game who saw the matches at Lord's last year and did not class Mr. Yardley's two innings of 50 against the players as the innings which gave

him the most real pleasure. The eye is as weary of seeing a monster innings made by one man at cricket, as it is of seeing an 'interminable series of spot-strokes made at billiards. The match which we would go farthest to see is a match in which neither innings exceeded 130, and the finish was close and exciting. And such matches would be much more likely to occur if the powers of defence were not as great as they are now.

As regards the players and their earnings, we again differ from 'Land and Water.' If the scores were shorter, there would not, we are aware, be so much time occupied by the gatekeepers in taking sixpences. But by commencing the matches a little later than the nominal time for beginning now it would be easy to ensure a great match lasting certainly two days, and the double benefit would be obtained, that more matches could be played in the season, and that the players would not be required to work so hard and so long at each match, and would, therefore, be fresher and more vigorous. The time at which all the great metropolitan grounds are fullest is between three and six in the afternoon; and even if it were practically unusual for an innings to be more than 150, as many men would willingly come to see a close match, as would now come in the hopes of seeing something sensational. We therefore differ from 'Land and Water,' in that we think, that, could some arrangement be effected by which the innings would be practically limited to 150—or even less—amateur batsmen, spectators, and professionals would see no cause for regret. Conservatism has no greater stronghold than in a game; and in such a game as cricket, where the change in conditions which were excellent

has been gradual, and where no equalising alteration has been attempted for years, it is naturally not to be expected that any such alteration will be adopted with enthusiasm; but we are nevertheless sure that if the change was made, all parties would, in their heart of hearts, look upon it as we have said.

There is a large class of men, chiefly moderate or inferior batsmen, who say that they find it difficult enough to maintain their position even as it is, and that if any advantage were taken from them they would scarcely care to play. Their average is small enough under present circumstances, and they are desperately afraid when they have to defend the present wickets with the present bat—what would it be if the wickets were longer or the bat smaller? To these we would say, that any such change as that we have alluded to would affect them but little. The innings of 60 would be about 60 still, and the man who gets 10 now, would not, under the altered circumstances, be by any means a more certain victim. It is upon the long scores that the change would tell, and upon the first-class players. The inferior batsmen would have just as many off half-volleys to hit to long-on, and straight long-hops to hit to square-leg; and snicks and draws would be just as likely to score as they are now. Whereas the man who bowls at a first-class batsman would not nearly so often as now throw up his hands in despair at seeing the ball, for which he has been patiently working, beat the man in and just miss the wicket by the proverbial 'coat of paint.'

The appeal to the figures of last year would be difficult to answer, were it not that the evil state of the weather, which prevailed during nearly all the summer, robs it of

much of its importance. It is true that the average of innings completed at Lord's does not exceed 150; but this is considerable, when the difficulty of getting runs in a rainy season is taken into consideration. And, when the weather was fine, we observe that the scores immediately increased, and that to counterbalance the comparatively small scores made in some of the matches (though even they are not very remarkable for meagreness), may be instanced the large innings played by the South against the North, by M.C.C. against Surrey, and the gigantic run-getting of both sides in the M.C.C. and Middlesex match. Nor are the following facts—which, having a horror of figures, we put as briefly as possible—uninteresting. We take them chiefly from John Lillywhite's 'Cricketers' Companion,' an excellent and careful compilation. There were over 220 three-figure innings made in 1871, no less than 9 of which exceeded 200. The Nottinghamshire eleven—exclusive of Elliott and Farrands, who only played in two matches—averaged between them 204. The Sussex eleven, exclusive of Mr. Weighell and Dean, averaged 157; and the Middlesex twelve, in three matches, show a total average of 384. Descending lower in the scale, we find that the total of the averages of the Harrow eleven—a notoriously bad one—was 127; of Eton, 163; of Winchester, 149; of Marlborough, 205; of Cheltenham, 185. And, although these figures do not correspond with the average of innings played in consequence of the arrangement by which in calculating individual averages a 'not out' adds nothing to the number of innings, yet they are sufficiently high to show that, if we remember how bad the season was, the run-getting in 1871 may be called great.

There are some players whose *beau idéal* of a cricket-ground was Lord's as it used to be some four or five years ago, when balls shot and twisted abnormally, and old Jimmy Grundy's straight long-hops required a great deal of watching, and were sure to be fatal to all but the most vigilant. We confess we cannot see the weight of the arguments of such men. Why are you not to have every instrument of the game as perfect as possible? Why is the ball to be round, the bat properly proportioned, and the wickets properly pitched, but the ground either not perfectly level or not perfectly grassed? It was, we admit, much pleasanter to see a match in the old days at Lord's, than to see one on the dead-level of the Oval: but that was solely because the run-getting was limited. With the means by which it was limited we quarrel. Putting out of consideration the danger of a ground not quite true, we maintain most strongly that the most beautiful cricket ought to be played on the most exact ground; and that if the position of one department of the game is too strong, it ought to be weakened by other means than neglecting to obtain level wickets. The necessity for watching the ball, and playing not blindly at the pitch but at the ball itself (unless, of course, it is possible to reach right up to the pitch), is a necessity which ought by all proper means to be encouraged. But we should not be inclined to consider as proper means any arrangement by which the bound of the ball should be abnormal. A false bound spoils a 'rest' at tennis; or a 'bully' at rackets; a false lean of the table does much to mar a game of billiards; and, by similar reasoning, we look upon a false bound at cricket as an evil. It is an evil, too, which is be-

coming rarer and more rare. As the grounds improve this one hope of the bowler becomes less; and it cannot be argued that the old state of things, when bowlers had such advantages, is the same as that which is coming, and to a considerable extent now is, where such advantages do not exist. We shall have occasion to say something of the power of the bowler over the ball later; but for the present would reiterate our conviction that any irregular assistance to the bowler, by incorrectness of the ground, is not for the advantage of cricket either ideally or practically.

It has been urged by some writers that the bats of the present day, even if they do not infringe the rule as to size, are, at least, larger than the bats of past times. That may be so, or may not; but, without expressing an opinion as to this point, unless it be that the compulsory application of a gauge by one or two umpires would do no harm and might do much good, we have no hesitation in saying that the bat is *a priori* a large weapon of defence, when considered relatively with the wickets. If a bat be pegged down at the proper distance in front of the stumps, it is exceedingly difficult to make the ball pass the bat and hit the wickets; and when, in addition to this, is considered the power of eye and hand which the batsman has to help him, and the enormous development of the theory of playing with a straight bat, the only thing to be wondered at seems to us to be that the bowlers are as successful as they are.

Mr. Grace's feats have shown to what a pitch batting can be carried; and though there is, at present, no one besides himself who can do anything approaching to what he does, yet experience

points to the conclusion that what has been will be again; and that, as Roberts has been eclipsed at billiards, Erwood equalled at racquets, and Barre at tennis, so if matters go on as they do now, we may expect to see others doing what Mr. Grace alone can do at cricket. We may remember what a sensation was caused when 500 was made in an innings in the England and Surrey match of some years ago. But now 500 is made over and over again; while, as far as regards individual scores, the number of three-figure innings made annually increases every year, and we should be extremely sorry to bet that 300 is not made by one man in a first-class match this year. Where is all this to stop? Every change made in the conditions of the game for the last twenty years has been in favour of the batsman, with the exception of the change in the rule as regards overhand bowling; and while there is an enormous development of the batsman's skill, bowling appears to make little or no progress. If this season is fortunate as regards the weather, we may, without being unreasonable, expect that the scores will be far larger than they were last season, when rainy days were the rule; and will either spectators or players really like that?

Before we leave this part of our subject we will quote a letter from Willsher—a man who has done as much as, if not more than any bowler of the present day to overcome the advantages of batsmen—which has reached us. He says, dating his letter November 22nd, 1870:

'My opinion has been, for the last three or four years, that the batting has gained a great superiority over the bowling. I also believe the game would be improved by giving the bowler a

better chance than he has at present. Now my opinion is, the good ground is the chief cause of batting beating the bowling. Most grounds are so true, consequently, the innings are bound, as a rule, to be long, and a bowler has to keep pounding away, match after match, till, no doubt it takes a deal of the sting out of his bowling from being overworked. . . . We are weak in bowling in Kent, so much that I have nearly always to keep up one end, and have often felt tired before commencing the match. The scores are so large, I feel certain the game is not so well balanced as it ought to be.

This is, of course, to be taken *cum grano*, as it is the opinion of a bowler; but it is the opinion of a man who has never shirked his work, and has never complained of or abused the duties which he has been called upon to perform.

We think, therefore, that the power of the batsman over the bowler is, as we said in 1870, too great, and that it ought to be diminished; and before going on to examine by what authority, or when we should like to see this done, we will stay for a moment to say a few words upon the arguments which have been brought forward against the changes towards which we incline.

These changes are either an increase in the size of the wicket, or a decrease in the size of the bat. It would not be necessary to add a fourth stump; by making each stump one-fourth of an inch more in diameter a considerable effect would be obtained, and the unwieldiness of the four-stump wicket would be avoided. But, we hear it said from the anti-alteration party, this would utterly change the game; it would be quite impossible to play off-stump balls with a straight bat, and all the evils of

crooked play and unscientific hitting would be introduced at once. You would compel a man either to stand with his leg in front of his wicket, or to play across at balls that are straight for the off-stump. This argument would be important if it was founded on correct premises; but we maintain that it is not. Supposing the change to make the difference of three-fourths of an inch in the breadth of the wicket, it would be necessary for the batsman to play as straight balls those which now would miss the off-stump by three-fourths of an inch. And how are they played? Mr. Grace, with his marvellous eye, can cut them to a certainty, or treat them as balls which would not hit the wicket; but by far the greater number of players play them with a straight bat to the left-hand of the bowler, or towards long-off. The difference would be, that instead of doing so *ex abundante cautela*, as at present, batsmen would be obliged to treat these balls as straight, and to play them in the way we have described, under pain of losing their wicket: and we are confident that it would be as much within the power of a player to guard his off-stump with a straight bat then as it is now. It would not be so easy, we admit; but our aim is to add to the batsman's difficulties. Against taking from the breadth of the bat we have met with no sound argument; and we are not disposed to contend that this would not, perhaps, be a better means of effecting our purpose than any other. It would necessitate greater accuracy of play, would increase the advantages which a straight player has over a crooked player, would not detract from the satisfaction of a good hit, while it would diminish the power of a detestable snick or fluke to break a bowler's heart. What was

taken away in breadth might, if necessary, be added in thickness, and the driving-power of the bat thus might be augmented. The change has the merit of being simple and easily carried out; and it has also the merit of being easily made the subject of experiment.

It does not seem as if the arguments against the means of effecting a balance of equilibrium were weighty enough to prevent their adoption; and if any change were made it ought to be made by a joint committee of the M.C.C. and great county clubs. But we would not be understood to advise the immediate diminution of all the bats, and increase in the size of all the stumps made at Lord's or the Oval. Cricketers are, as we have said before, eminently conservative; and it is by no means certain that matters are nearly ripe enough yet for change. Precipitancy would be very dangerous; and if the alteration were not universally carried out, the lamentable condition would be the result which at present so banefully affects croquet and football, namely, that there is no one code of rules generally followed. We, however, think that the change is one which must come some day; and that lovers of cricket—as opposed to mere lovers of sensational run-getting—would do well to look it in the face, and so act that when it is adopted by the leading clubs it may be adopted with the consent of the cricketing world as a whole. Far worse than any discrepancy between the powers of the batsman and the bowler would be any disagreement as to the rules of the game; and we had sooner see bowlers worn out, and batsmen perpetually scoring two or three hundred runs, than see one part of the cricketing world using stumps one size, and the other

using stumps another size. Therefore, while we are of opinion that some restoration of the balance of power would be advantageous now, and that ere very long it may be absolutely necessary, we do not desire to press it with undue violence at present, or say that the game cannot go on unless it is adopted. There may be bowlers' matches in which it appears impossible to get runs, over and over again; but their number is steadily diminishing, as steadily as the number and the ability of first-class bowlers. And if batting goes on increasing at its present rate, and more men spring up with powers approximate to those now possessed by Mr. Grace alone, the modification which we now think advisable will be thought necessary by others than ourselves.

And now let us turn from the subject of material reform in cricket, and see if there are no means by which the game might be improved without going the lengths of altering the stumps or bat. And first with regard to that which is a growing cause of complaint—the hour at which matches are begun, and the delay which takes place during their course. Of two things one. Either the time at which the beginning of a match is fixed is unnecessarily early, and a later appointment would give more room for the men who have business to do to get it done—in which case the stumps ought to be notoriously pitched later, say at one o'clock—or eleven o'clock is the proper time to begin if it is desired that the match should be finished, in which case the bell ought to be rung punctually at ten minutes to eleven and the place of any player who has not arrived at half-past filled up. Nothing can be worse than the dawdling which precedes the opening of a great match on many

grounds, unless it be the undue time occupied by dinner and refreshment. The M.C.C. have a goodly rule that the players shall not leave the ground in a body for refreshment during the progress of the innings; and if this rule were generally adopted there would not be seen so much of the slackness in outfielding which characterizes so many elevens. Surrey are lamentable in this respect; and to this fault, as much as to any other, we attribute the falling-off which has taken place in their cricket during the last eight or nine years. Men ought not to be so anxious for refreshment during an innings as to be obliged to go *en masse* to the booth; and we are quite sure that repeated 'liquoring up' neither adds to the energy nor the comfort of a player. Heaven forbid that we should begrudge a poor man his beer, especially a poor cricketer; but we insist on it that it is a sorry sight to see play interrupted while eleven men in good health go to get drink; and the way in which the day is cut to waste by dawdling for refreshment, by dawdling for smoke, by dawdling for practice, is enough to make thoroughly angry any one who is a really keen cricketer. People play cricket, we are aware, for amusement, and therefore do not wish to be made slaves to the game; but the extreme laxity exhibited in many first-class matches now is a mistake, and does not conduce to the real advantage of cricket, or to the real satisfaction of the player.

Another point in which the game might be improved is in respect to the attention paid to bowling. We have devoted ourselves to showing that the bowler is at a disadvantage, and that he has difficulties to contend with which ought to be modified; but the bowlers, as a rule, do not struggle

against these disadvantages, with the utmost energy. There is a good deal of the *nascitur non fit* about a bowler; but, even so, much can be done by practice, and this practice would be much more likely to be forthcoming if more encouragement was given to bowling. It is not very long since every gentleman player who made fifty at the Oval was publicly presented with a bat, and every professional player given a guinea; and even now something of this sort is done, while it is not at all an unusual thing for considerable collections to be made for professionals who perform great batting feats in important matches. What reward is given to the bowler? Again, what point in bowling is more the subject of praise than a succession of maiden overs by which, as we have said before, the batsman is enabled to get his eye in and become invincible? The test of good bowling is the number of wickets obtained for so many balls, or the number of runs lost per wicket, not the number of balls bowled without result. If the critics would be less lavish of the praise which they accord to maidens, the bowlers would not be so tempted to bowl long-hops.

We think that much is to be learned as to the command which a bowler has over a ball. The author of the 'Cricket Field,' a book which deservedly occupies a high place in cricket literature, says that a man may twist himself round, pirouette on one leg, and perform any antics he likes, but that he cannot make the ball curl in the air from the time when it leaves his hand to the time when it touches the ground. This is not the case. A tennis ball leaving a racquet curls in the air enormously, and it is possible to make a tennis ball hit the same side-

wall three times without touching the ground. A racquet ball curls in the air, and a cricket ball does also, though necessarily in a less degree. The reason of this is plain. We do not live in space, and the atmosphere is a material substance, upon which the rotatory motion of any ball acts. This spin produces a curl, very slight indeed in the case of a cricket ball, but still perceptible. We mention this because, though in this regard we do not think that much effect could be produced, it is an instance of the fact which we wish to prove, which is, that much more could be done in the way of 'twist' in bowling than is done at present. It is only necessary to see Roberts or Dufton throw a billiard ball on to the table to be aware of the enormous power which wrist-play gives over a ball. And as over a billiard ball so over a cricket ball. The extraordinary 'breakback' put upon some of Southerton's deliveries is an instance in point, and Mr. Buchanan's bowling is another. We believe that even more could be done in this way than is done by either of these great bowlers, and that attention to this power would have enormous effect. There are some indeed who, with no little truth, insist that accuracy is the great desideratum for a bowler; but accuracy and power can be combined; and whereas any ordinary batsman can on a good ground go on playing purely straight balls for ever, it is not so easy to play balls which have great twist and great accuracy also. Twist prevents blind play, and does regularly, and in an orthodox manner, exactly what used to be done in an unorthodox manner, by the badness of the ground; that is, it makes a batsman play at the ball rather than at the place where he

thinks it will be. Whether a bowler can by any movement of his wrist or fingers make a ball actually shoot is a question; we are disposed to think that he cannot. But practice will give a bowler the faculty of making a ball hang or come fast off the ground, and twist either from the off or from the leg.

Another means of deceiving the batsman, little cultivated among bowlers but very effective and very easy to practise, is changing the height at which the ball is delivered. When the arm is high at the moment of delivery the ball seems to be coming further than it is, and the batsman is apt to set himself to play as a half-volley a ball which is in reality a good length ball, without being able to discover his mistake until it is too late. A third is in change of pace. A. Shaw is a wonderful bowler in this respect; he changes his pace without showing the batsman by change of action that he is going to do so, and he owes a great many of the wickets which he gets to the care with which he has cultivated this art. Mr. Absolon is another bowler who, without having practised to any great extent, or developed any extraordinary powers, could show great signs of command over the ball, and it was always said of him that he preferred bowling on a true to bowling on an untrue ground. He perpetually altered the height of his delivery and his pace, and to some extent would make the ball curl or break back as he thought fit.

But even without development of these resources of the bowler we think much might be done by energy and painstaking; we have already pointed out how far we agree with those who attribute entirely to shortcomings on the part of the bowlers the enormous

scores which are frequently made, and therefore will merely reiterate our assertion that much could be done by such persons as have influence over young players to inculcate a greater zeal about bowling than exists at present.

In outfielding, too, far more keenness might with advantage be displayed. The All England eleven a few years ago used to be remarkable for good fielding, and the Eton eleven of 1870 was also praiseworthy in this respect, but, as a rule, the fielding in even the best matches is very deficient; and when we have named about twelve gentlemen, with Messrs. V. E. and I. D. Walker at their head, we have mentioned nearly all who really work hard when in the field. That this is partly due to the heartsickness caused by the hopelessness of getting batsmen out we are ready to admit; but even with the present disadvantages fielders might do more than they usually do to display the beauty of their part of the game. And in the opinion of some of the best judges fielding is the pleasantest part of the game. Not, perhaps, at this time of the year, or when October has warned most players to change their bats for their guns; but in warm weather, and in a good match, fielding is very enjoyable, especially if it is done keenly and with zest. Good fielding, too, encourages a bowler, whilst bad fielding and dropped catches break his heart. If every one fielded as well as the gentlemen we have named, or as Smith, the M.C.C. professional, the scores would be less, and the pleasure of the game, both to spectators and players, would be greater.

There is a tendency to overdo cricket as to overdo everything else at the present day, and any man with an ordinary amount of skill and with a good deal of

leisure may, if he likes, play six days a week from May to September. If he is a first-class player, he plays in the first-class matches during the height of the season, and during the rest of it he takes part in a succession of one-day, or, perhaps, two-day matches in all sorts of places and for all sorts of clubs. He cares little whether he wins or loses, and plays with little interest, except in his own performances and in the quality of his lunch. There is none of that all-absorbing excitement which used once to pervade almost every match, and which now seems confined to the School and University matches, and to some of those in which northern counties are engaged. This is partly due to the hopelessness of finishing the match, which is the characteristic of most cricketing contests. It is partly, however, due to excess in the number of clubs established, and in the number of matches played. If a man plays for M.C.C. one day, for I.Z. the next, for Quiddnunes or Harlequins a third, and rings the changes upon all the clubs to which he belongs in his county or his university, we defy him to feel any great excitement about the result of any ordinary match. In this respect we agree with those who praise bygone days, when Alfred Mynn was one of 'the grand old Kent eleven,' and spectators of a match knew that every one of the twenty-two whose exertions were before the public was doing his best to win. We should like to see more keenness and zeal displayed, a greater desire for victory, and more chagrin at defeat. This would decrease the scores made, perhaps, but would increase the pleasure of the players, certainly.

We should also like to see men play more for their side and less for themselves. The system of

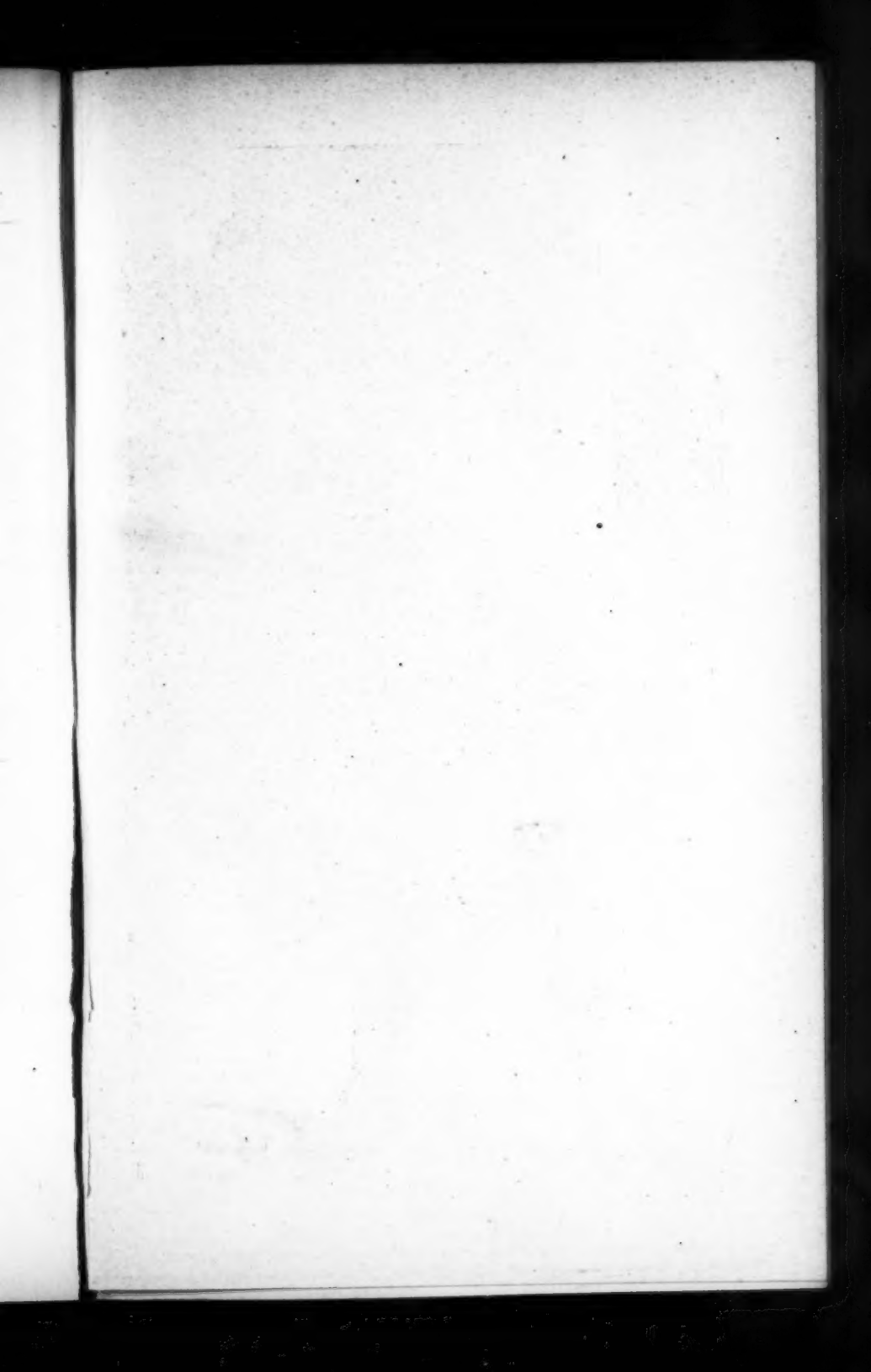
publishing averages, and the lavish encomiums of the cheaper sporting press, have led men to look upon 'self' as the great object to be considered; we have known men, good players, and good fellows, lose all interest in a match after their individual innings is brought to an abrupt conclusion. This is not the spirit of a true cricketer. Want of success in batting ought to act as a stimulant to an increase of exertion in other parts of the game. A man who has got a 'duck,' ought to feel that he owes something to his side, and seek to make up for his shortcomings by his zeal in the field. Nor do we say this only in the interests of the spectators, we are perfectly certain that the man who plays for his side, enjoys the game far more than he who only plays for himself.

And now we have nearly said our say. We would have leading cricketers contemplate what we consider the approaching necessity of material reform, and, though they do not come to any hasty conclusion or act before the proper time has arrived, we would have them avoid any undue respect for prejudices which, however eagerly maintained, may be disadvantageous to the game; and when it is evident that unless some change is made cricket, as a game, will be less interesting and not so well balanced as it ought to be, we would have the leading men so act that any change which they may authorize may commend itself to the whole cricketing world.

Until that is the case we would have greater encouragement given to bowlers in the way of reward, and we would have greater attention paid to bowling as an art, and as a practice. Let the captains of school elevens and the heads of the principal clubs pay attention to this, and much may be done. If those who take part in great matches show a disposition not to look upon batting as the only enjoyable part of the game, and to enjoy fielding, their example will be followed. And if the managers of metropolitan grounds set their faces against the dilatoriness and waste of time which at present obtains, they will deserve the thanks of all true cricketers.

We cannot conclude without expressing a wish for the success of the scheme for taking an eleven of gentlemen to Canada. If it is well carried out, it will extend a love of the game more efficiently than any tour of professionals. The English representatives will have much responsibility not only in this respect but in keeping up the social reputation of the cricketers of old England. They will, we have no doubt, do much both in this way and by the exhibition of their powers with the bat and the ball to make the undertaking successful, especially if they do not fail to remember that there is more to be aimed at than their own enjoyment, and that the laws which regulate hospitality impose duties on the guest as well as on the host.







Drawn by E. Buckman]

STUDIES OF STREET LIFE.—No. V.

THE COALHEAVER.

STUDIES OF STREET LIFE.

V. *The Coalheaver, Ancient and Modern.*

BY JAMES GREENWOOD.

THE coalheaver of the olden time, the genuine 'coaly,' hailing from Bankside, the delights of which it was his pride to chant over foaming pots of beer in his hours of evening relaxation, is vanishing from among us. The railway has been his undoing. He still exists in the flesh; but strings of 'trucks,' each containing nine tons, whisked from Staffordshire to King's Cross in half a day, have bowled him over, and crushed out of him that jealousy of 'caste' that once distinguished him, expanding his manly bosom, and, in all probability, keeping his back broad. Every one whose memory will carry him back five-and-twenty or thirty years, must remember him. His smutty, jolly visage was never seen except backed by a 'fantail'—a close-fitting skull-cap of stout and serviceable leather, from which depended a shapely flap of the same durable material, which covered the breadth of his back, and while in its black and highly-polished condition, it served as an ornament of which the sturdy bearer might well be proud, it answered the doubly useful purpose of protecting his shoulder-blades from being too cruelly indented by angular and awkward 'nobbles,' contained in the two-hundred-weight sack-load, while, at the same time, it screened his jacket from being chafed into holes. The coalheaver of those days wore a jacket that, in style and build, was as recognised a badge of his craft as is the flannel jacket of the bricklayer, or the red woollen cap and the sack apron and bib of the brewer. It was of fustian, mouse-coloured, with long sleeves and velveteen facings, and

it descended lower than his hips. It buttoned close up to his chin, and was garnished with a double row of little pearl buttons from top to bottom, and closely set on. His continuations were of velveteen, generally of some brilliant colour; but they descended no lower than the knees, and there were held secure with a buckle and strap. Otherwise, how could he display his calves? The coalheaver of a past generation was proud of his calves as any flunkey of modern Belgravia, and with infinitely more honest and manly reason. I am not aware that it was ever asserted by the coalheaver's most malignant enemy that he padded his calves. Gracious Heavens! it makes one shudder almost to imagine what would have been the fate of that rash and misguided 'coaly' who so attempted to impose on the brotherhood! In fancy one sees him, the pride of his gang, deftly footing it on the plank that leads from the barge to the wharf, the frail bridge yielding gracefully at every forward step of the hob-nailed feet from which rise those swelling pillars of strength, the cords and sinews of which the thin fabric of the white stocking is insufficient to conceal. One can imagine the subdued sigh of envy that stirs every bosom on board that barge, as his mates contemplate such splendid examples of pedal perfection—a sigh, however, that, even before it is uttered, is tempered by the soothing reflection, 'He is one of us, at all events, and the whole barge reflects his glory. We are all of one gang, and his magnificent calves—three inches bigger round than those of any fellow,

sifter or carrier, between this and Blackfriars—support our honour as well as his own.' Just fancy it coming to this, and then—fair in view of the stalwart shovellers on barges moored at adjacent wharves—a little accident happens, and one of the splendid calves is seen to have shifted to the shin, or to have settled down to where the bandage of bootlace embraces the symmetrical ankle! What would happen? Supposing the impostor possessed the least sense of shame, the roar of derision and mockery, the awful hurricane of 'chaff,' to say nothing of the pitiless pelting of handy bits of coal from the vessels alongside, would drive the detected one to atone for the humiliation he has brought on his gang by leaping at once into the rippling flood, trusting to the dishonest weight and bulk in his stockings to keep him down. Better so than that he should trust to the tender mercies of his mates. The deluded ones, whose standing toast for weeks has been 'Joe's calves'—who have roused in their acquaintances the bitterest emotions the human heart is capable of, by bragging of the dimensions of Joe's calves, and challenging them to produce their equals. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho! The whole gang will be known as 'Joe's calves,' to their dying day. What amount of vengeance can satisfy them? Shall they cut him down with their shovels, and chop him up so small that his wretched remnants may safely, and without fear of detection, be sent out in those sacks he has so signally disgraced? That would be killing him at once, and letting him off too easy. The suggestion, 'Make the warmint swallow the paddin',' is rejected on the same humane grounds. No; he must be banished from the guild of coalheavers. From this time forth he is an outcast. His fantail is reversed, so

that none may see his disgraced face; and he is kicked off the wharf, while a solemn compact is made that any man who so far forgets himself as ever again to mention his name shall be bound to stand 'pots round,' until it is the unanimous opinion that the transgression is atoned—a penalty so alarmingly indefinite that it is sure to have the desired effect.

The coalheaver's calves, to a great extent, used to be his capital. They were his credentials whenever he applied at a wharf for a job. They were not to be acquired by any artificial process, every hair's-breadth of their enormous girth was born of sack-carrying, of dancing up that yielding plank, with two hundred and twenty-four pounds of coal in a sack encumbering the back. The ganger glanced at the applicant's shoulders and at his legs, and if the inspection proved satisfactory, the engagement was certain.

As for his honesty, it is a remarkable fact, that of all the real labouring population, those the sweat of whose brow is due to the conveyance of coal, stand pre-eminent for that virtue. Our daily newspapers attest to the fact. Take a file of them, even those that regard as their leading feature the chronicling of the smaller vices of mankind, and in the list of transgressors the coalheaver will rarely indeed be found. Bricklayers' labourers may quarrel and fight; navvies get drunk and murderously assault the police; dustmen, scavengers, barrowmen, and market-porters may figure before the magistrate to answer for their misdeeds; but the coalheaver of the old school is the honourable exception. That he is partial to beer cannot be denied; and when, by rare good luck, he is enabled to drink enough of it to intoxicate him, the probabilities are, that his peculiar pro-

clivities, pugnacious or otherwise, are developed under the influence of alcohol; but the companions of his conviviality, of his boosings, and his spreeings, are coalies; and ever since coals were carried, it has been a maxim amongst the sturdy giants of the sack that a 'heaver never hollers.' That is to say, he enjoys himself in his own way, in his own quarter (which is, or used to be, in the courts and alleys by the river's brink, on either side of the Thames, from Southwark Bridge to Hungerford), and by all means avoids acquaintance with the police.

But, as before mentioned, the race of waterside fantails are diminishing and must continue to diminish. A very little observation will prove this. Undoubtedly the consumption of coal is greater now than ever, and the number of coal-carrying vehicles that perambulate our thoroughfares are as three to one, compared with what they were a quarter of a century since. But how about the men who accompany them? Who is it now that brings the promising black load for delivery to our doors? Is it the cheery, bluff, hearty, knee-breeched son of Anak, who had about him a flavour of lighterman as well as coalheaver, and whose every movement was suggestive of the barge in which the raw material of so many happy fireside hours made its slow way from the lighter in the Pool to the wharf above bridge, and who cried, 'Coals, marm!'—especially if the snow was on the ground—in a voice that of itself was almost enough to warm one? Is this the modern coalheaver? Alas! for the advance of civilization, and the railway! no. The modern waggoner is not a coalheaver at all. He is a coal-porter—a commonplace dock-labouring-looking individual, who might as regards propriety of attire, leave

his team and his sacks, and take a job at gutter-sweeping, mangle-turning, carpet-beating, anything. Probably he never was at Bankside in his life—never loaded a coal-barge—never trod that quivering shore-plank, a graceful performance on which was the ancient coaly's delight and pride. The fantail is foreign to the modern makeshift. He wears any sort of cap; and you have the malicious satisfaction of knowing that every time he shoulders a full sack, the coal-dust sifts its way under the folds of the innovator's dirty neckerchief, and finds its way down his back. He knows nought of a fustian long jacket, with pearl buttons, and trimmed with velveteen; he wears a dirty smock frock as a substitute for the aforesaid tight and trim fashion; he wisps a bit of frayed string below his knee, to keep his slip-slop corduroys from dangling in the mud. As for the calves of his legs, the least said about them the better.

No; there can be no question that the respectability of coal has suffered grievously since the railway companies undertook its consignment from the pit to the domestic coal-cellar. There used to be a mystery about coal. It was the more welcome to our hearths because it really seemed that its career of peril was unceasing until it arrived there. Our coal-pits were not then no farther distant from us than breakfast is from dinner time; they were situated in the 'Black Country,' hundreds of miles away—days' and nights' tedious voyaging away from London Bridge. The Londoner who had penetrated to the region of coal-mines was looked on as something of a traveller, and as an individual whose wondrous stories might well be regarded with suspicion. Coal-pits, in those times, were horrible places. Sensational writing for the

newspapers was not then invented; but, occasionally, an account of a descent of a shaft found its way into print, and then, as we sat with our chairs edged to the fender, and the ruddy fire warming us, we read of little boys working stark naked in the black bowels of the earth, and of women who crept along on all-fours, pushing the little tram-truck before them with their heads, the leather 'boss' they wore on their foreheads excoriating the skin, and chafing the hair away, so that mere girls of sixteen might be seen as bald as old men; of 'hewers,' who lay nearly nude, and at full length, in narrow chinks and shelves in the black walls, pecking at coal above their heads, with a tallow candle in a socket on their foreheads to light them. It was dreadful to picture hundreds of men and women in such an exceptionably horrible predicament, with the very air they breathe igniting at the candle-flame, and converting the fathomless pit into a life-destroying furnace that the waters of a river were barely sufficient to extinguish. They manage these matters better now. Science and humanity, hand in hand, have advanced of late with such prodigious strides that very much that was barbarous and at the same time impudently barefaced in the last generation is now but a dim recollection, nearly lost in the mist of the past. At the same time, it must not be imagined that even in the present shining year of grace 1872, in the matter of getting coal from the bowels of the earth all is perfection. It is a terrible trade still. Not more than three months since it came in my way to make the descent of a pit in the south of Staffordshire, and the remembrance of that two hours' exploration is renewed in a startling manner whenever I

meet a coal-waggon or even a coal-heaver. The mere sight of a coal-scuttle was sufficient to cause me a tremor; but as I now can contemplate that useful domestic vessel with something like equanimity, I have hopes of in time recovering entirely from my Staffordshire shock. It was a well-regulated pit; one of the best-conditioned on the broad and inky estate of the Earl Dudley. But an evil repute hung about it. The fact is, it was not the first time that I had trod the black mud of Lock's Lane in search of adventure. The first time was about three years since, when there came to London the awful news that this identical coal-mine—the Lock's Lane—was flooded, and every poor soul at work at the time drowned. It was the suddenness of the flood that made the case peculiar. No one had dreamt of lurking water near at hand, or at least of more of it than the great pump that night and day is on duty at the pit banks could master, but all of a sudden, *souse!* as though some enormous bason had been tilted over the pit-ways were filled from floor to ceiling. Happily there were not many hands in the pit at the time—only thirteen, including men and lads—and besides these there were some horses. As soon as the calamity was discovered measures were taken to ascertain how high the water had rose, and when it was found that not only were the road-ways about the 'pit's eye' full to the brim, but that the water had climbed to a height of eighteen feet up the shaft itself; nearly all hope was abandoned by the great mob of sooty men who came about the Lock's Lane pit, and whose despairing white eyes in the darkness was a sight to behold.

Nearly all hope; not quite all. We well-bred and refined folks

are apt in these days to over estimate what are called deeds of valour. The original standard has dwindled so with our degenerate habits that any man of ordinary old-fashioned pluck may fairly account himself a head taller than it. For samples of the 'real grit,' as Americans say, you might do worse than descend the rails of the social ladder almost to the very last round, and to where the feet of the machine rests in the mud. The cool heads and warm hearts about that horrid Lock's Lane water hole, two hundred yards in depth, were of men of grit. They worked on, merely trying the mettle of the pump that could suck up, heaven knows how many thousand gallons of water in an hour, as well as of another steam pump fetched in a hurry. And day and night for sixty hours they never flagged, descending in the tub from time to time to holloa and listen for a reply. It seemed that only by a miracle a reply could come; for now, for three days and nights, the shaft had been choked, and as far as was known every airway stopped. Perhaps the brave poor fellows had faith in miracles: if they had it was confirmed, and that in a way that to the end of their lives will never be forgotten. After all those weary hours,—by the time they had sunk the water and there were a good eighteen inches of spare room between the flood and the ceilings of the 'roadways,'—after all, there came a voice across the surface of that black pestilent river, crying, 'All right! some of us are alive!'

In twenty minutes the incredible news had flown through Brierley Hill; in half an hour the local newspaper had it set out in the very boldest type along the shop window, quite concealing from public view—for the newspaper

man was likewise a fancy stationer—many articles exposed there for sale; but what did that matter now? Who wanted to buy anything but a newspaper containing an account of the miracle?

But it was not quite worked out yet. The sixty hours must become eighty before there was any hope of reaching the poor prisoners; but, meanwhile, those above were not idle. The hovel or lamp shed was hastily fitted up as a hospital, bedsteads being built up of bricks, and with mattresses and blankets so hastily hauled out of the drapers' shops that the trade tickets still dangled to them after the beds were made. Others gave their attention to the making a raft of such convenient dimensions that when the water sufficiently subsided it might be floated on the surface of it just below the ceiling. Long before the raft was ready came generous contributions of bottles of brandy with bread and beef enough, good Lord, to provision a country workhouse. But the brandy and the beef, and the rest of the good cheer was not required. Bread and butter cut thin and warm tea in cans were the proper articles of diet for famished men, and these were carried down with the raft and the raft was floated, and after a voyage of nearly a hundred yards reached the horrid oozy shore where all this time the entombed miners had been crouching, their only chance of life being to sniff off the surface of the dreadful water (so foul that the fiercest pangs of thirst could not tempt them to drink of it) the fresh air that the buckets of the pump sent down at every dip. They were all rescued excepting one man who went mad and ran away from his comrades. He was found huddled up in a water hole into which he had probably

slipped. And not to prolong this sad story, afterwards I saw the beds in the lamp shed occupied, and the men and lads, helpless as babies, being nursed and tended by their swart horny-handed miner mates with a tenderness that could not be exceeded in the best regulated London hospital. I doubt if one would find such delicate attention in any hospital in the world. Actually there was one fellow with a wooden leg, and he had muffled round the iron-slid tip of it an old woollen stocking, so that in stumping about the sick beds he might make less noise.

It was this same pit that, three months since, I ventured to descend. It was my first experience of the kind, and now that my curiosity is gratified I don't think that I could be induced to make a journey again to Staffordshire for the pleasure of having it renewed. Have the readers of "*London Society*" any idea of what a coal-pit, viewed from the earth's surface, is like? It has a not very imposing appearance. It is simply a round black hole about twice the size of an ordinary 'loo' table, and straddling over it is a sort of gallows, a wire rope as thick as one's wrist hanging down over a wheel and lost in the depths below. By-and-by the action is reversed, a clinking and a wheezing is heard in the adjoining engine-shed and up comes the 'tub' (a square box holding twenty-two hundred weight) filled with coal. It came up so while our little party of six (I being the only novice present) was waiting to go down. I viewed the coarse strong tub with approbation, making sure that as soon as it was emptied we should all get into it; but in this I was disappointed. It was not in the tub, but standing on the grating on

which the tub had stood, that we had to descend; on the naked grating with nothing to 'hold on' to but a cross-chain over head. But the pit was only six hundred feet deep, and the coal smoke that arose from the enormous mine furnace below was not unbearable by the time it had benumbed one's senses a bit.

Six hundred feet down, and half a mile this way or that under low-arched roofs, from which depended frequent fleeces of fungus, snowy white and looking like lamb's wool, and making the black floor and the black walls—lit by feeble tallow dips stuck there in dabs of clay, blacker than ever. We all carried tallow dips stuck in balls of clay, and in Indian file followed the 'Buttrey' and his foreman through the turnings and windings that led to the 'chambers' from which coal was being hewn. Chambers as wide as an ordinary street and as high as the top of the three-storied houses; and on every side, whenever the tiny light of the red-nosed dip was shifted, was revealed a human creature naked to the waist and blacker than any sweep, with savage gleaming eyes and savage glittering teeth, and with a weapon in his hand that in the uncertain light looked like a tomahawk, grinning at you, or making a dash with his weapon apparently in the direction of your visage, but which alights harmlessly on the face of the coal wall.

Heavers, packers, tubbers, fillers, these are all men, and hard as the work is they earn good wages, and if they dislike the labour they are at liberty to leave it. But they don't dislike the labour, and they are jolly enough—all except the boys. It was these boys that so perpetually haunted my coal-scuttle when I returned from Staffordshire. It is villainously cruel

to serve the poor little chaps so. The matter stands this way. The hewer is the man whose business it is to 'break in' at the foot of a coal wall. He lies on his side or on his stomach, and he breaks in with his peck right along for a length, say of twenty feet, a gap that is two feet or less in height. He pecks his way into the rock till he has burrowed sixteen or eighteen feet. Naturally in the process of pecking he makes a deal of 'slack,' or small, and the boy in question is called the 'slack boy.' Regarded as a boy, as a human creature, he is slack indeed. He is not much like a boy. He is more like a large-sized monkey. All fours is his perpetual posture, and he wears a leather girdle about his waist from which an iron chain depends, the other end of it being attached to an iron cart. The slack boy has an iron shovel as well, and the business of his wretched life is to crawl in at the hole the hewer makes, to fill his cart with chips and dust, and then to crawl out again with the load, always on his hands and knees, and with his poor limbs hung about with a few rags of which nakedness might be ashamed.

In the olden time the imaginative mind needed no printed novel to entertain it. A shovelful of Wallsends, and a stir of the poker, and there was a story in as many chapters, at least, as there were bars to the grate; and the fuel sank lower and lower until all its characters became old folk, with ashy grey hair and beards, and the narrative reached a natural conclusion. The coal of a quarter of a century ago was rich in mystery for those who were too young to look for faces between the fire-bars that seem to have altogether departed from the coal of the present day. Gold used to grow in it, and be consigned along with the load

the Bankside coalheavers shot down into the cellars. I know it for a fact. A young friend of mine, of a geological turn of mind, imparted the secret to me once when we were home for the holidays, and I slept with him at his father's house. He revealed to me, under a board in his bedroom floor, nearly a hundred-weight that he had, from time to time, abstracted from below; and there were the veins of the precious metal distinctly running through every 'nubble.' His idea was to 'smelt' it, and after disposing of the few hundreds of pounds the golden produce would realize, for him and I to run away from home, and try our luck at the Coral Islands. We used, when everybody was abed, to make an enormous fire in the bedroom grate, and place a tin dustpan in the fender to catch the auriferous deposit; and if perseverance could have ensured us success, undoubtedly we should have secured it; but, unfortunately, we contrived to set the chimney on fire, and the consequent expense severed our acquaintance for ever.

Before railway-travelling at the rate of forty miles an hour had whisked to the winds the awe-inspiring element that invested it, coal was treated with much more respect than at the present time. Traffic in the article was limited to a few firms of merchants who were lightermen as well as barge and wagon-owners, and the business was kept snug, and lucrative, and highly respectable. To be a coal-merchant was to be a man whose wealth and substance were undoubted. It meant extensive premises and plant, and the employment of so large a number of men, that, for safety sake, the clerk who went to the bank on Saturdays to fetch the wages was invariably accompanied by the wharf watchman. A man in those days would no

more have thought of setting up as a coal-merchant on the strength of possessing a hundred pounds or so, than he would of styling himself a market-gardener because of the crop of scarlet-runners yielded out of his little back garden. But those ruthless disenchanters and levellers, the railway companies, have altered all this. Their enormous 'coal stores' are open to all comers, and they are content to be wholesale, retail, anything at a profit. They encourage middlemen, 'agents,' hangers-on of any kind that can bring them custom. It is slop-work. Any one can be a coal-merchant now, just as he may be a 'merchant-clothier,' or an 'importer and bonder of foreign wines,' but with far greater facility, and no risk at all. I may be a coal-merchant, and able to transact business at an hour's notice to the extent of scores of tons, all the time that my parlour grate is encumbered with a fire-brick, that the meagre supply in the scuttle may be economised. All that I have to do is to write up, 'Agent for this, that, or t'other' celebrated collieries, with a list of prices, and then sit down and wait for customers. This is the system that the railway coal depôt encourages, and it is one fraught with loss and annoyance to the unwary. The order is given to the agent under the innocent impression that 'coals are coals,' and that it makes no difference at whose instance they are despatched from the wholesale warehouse. This is an error. In the knee-breeches and fantail period it might have been so. Then there were 'Wallsends,' which were the best, and there were 'Seconds,' which were not Wallsends, and that exhausted the catalogue; but now there are as many names for varieties and qualities of coal as for roses at a flower-show, and this

is the opportunity of Jeremiah Diddler, coal-agent. It is an undoubted fact, that facility and cheapness of transit induces pit-owners to send to the London market much rubbish that, under the old 'sea-borne' plan, would not have paid for carriage; and it is out of this stuff that the person who is a merchant by virtue of a brass door-plate, gets what is vulgarly called the 'pull.' The current price of house coal of decent quality being, say twenty-five shillings, Mr. Diddler can buy a perfectly good-looking black and shiny resemblance to the honest mineral for nineteen shillings; and it is for an article of this quality that he bargains when, in discharge of his duty as an agent, he forwards your order. The railway-store people are not responsible for the cheat. It is their officially-branded waggon that delivers the coal, and you take it for granted that they have sent you what you ordered; but should you complain, you will be told that the company are innocent of any business transaction between you and themselves; that in the transaction in question, they were merely carriers; and that your remedy, if any, is against Mr. Diddler, whose order for two tons of Slagg's celebrated Ashburn-ums, to be delivered to you, may be seen on their books. Of course there are exceptions, and there can be no doubt that when direct application is made at a railway coal depôt, the genuine article may be obtained; but my prejudiced mind will never be fully assured of the fact while they continue to send out their coal in the charge of individuals who are mere truck-shunters and heavy-goods carmen, and not real and original coalheavers of the old-fashioned type, an example of whom adorns a preceding page.

TRAVELS OF YOUNG CŒLEBS.

CHAPTER VII.

FOURTH JOURNEY.

IN the train one day we met a tall, meagre, bright, modest creature, who was attended by her maid, and who was reading a railway novel. Kinahan, with an amazing effrontery, was of course soon on speaking terms with her, and good-naturedly introduced me. He soon discovered that she was Miss Louisa Tupper-ville, an heiress: 'Lean in person,' he said, 'but fat in purse,' and in his favourite slang declared that I ought to be 'slipped' at her. I could pardon this rude couraging metaphor for his good intentions; and very soon had paid her a visit on her own invitation. She was terribly 'afraid of men,' she told me, and seemed always to convey by her striking manner that they nourished wicked designs towards her. Yet she was plain. We spoke of Kinahan, and said, plainly, 'He is a great admirer of yours.' She started—then coloured. 'Oh!' she said, 'I don't know what to think of Mr. Kinahan. I am afraid, do you know, he is a very *dreadful* person. What do you think?' It is curious that I should have actually heard my friend, whose knowledge of female nature was profound, actually furnish an answer to this speculation: 'Whenever the women talk of a man's being *dreadful*, depend on it they like him.' This seemed to me nonsense when he made the remark; and it certainly was odd that it should be confirmed by the expression of her face. Miss Tupper played the part with the stolidity of a china mandarin which I had noted in the draw-

ing-room, but I think, somehow, did not regard me with favour. Indeed, though I exerted myself amazingly, I was hardly satisfied. I seemed to be making play for the absent: for there came lulls and intervals when everything seemed to flag; but the introduction of Kinahan seemed to stimulate and set everything going again. This was satisfactory so far, but still did not give me the conspicuous place which I sought for myself.

As I was going away she mentioned one who was to be a new actor in our little drama—her uncle Bolton, 'who was coming down for a few days.' It was a dreadful position, wasn't it, for one with all her responsibilities—the 'terrible' land, the tenants, and all that upon her. She felt like a child. I should laugh at her for making such a confession. I suppose I ought to have struck in at once with a bold suggestion that she should choose a protector, who would take all that trouble on himself. Kinahan would have done it in a moment. But such speeches seem to me always to be forward, and even impudent: it shows a want of respect if there be real admiration in the case: and so I thought it better not. Kinahan says, 'The women expect these things to be said to them, and like a fellow the better the more free and easy he is.' But the question remains, '*What sort of women?*'

Within a few days I received a charming looking little billet, with an exquisite monogram in colours and gold, that looked as

if it had been embroidered in floss silk. It was from her, and ran as follows:—

‘DEAR MR. SILLOPES,

‘If you have nothing better to do—*which I am afraid you have*—would you come and meet a few friends at dinner on Tuesday next? I am quite frightened at the notion, but every one tells me I ought to do something of the kind, being in so *terribly responsible* a position. Do come.

‘Yours, sincerely,

‘LOUISA TUPPER.’

This was indeed satisfactory progress; and all in so short a time. How wise *now* seemed my restraint, in not precipitating matters. Wise in my generation, I resolved to say nothing of the matter to Kinahan—or to the other fellows. It was better to keep the stages of my successful progress secret, and let the event burst on them. On the day appointed I set off, and reached Tupperseourt in good time. The room was full of people, and I was announced and advanced up to the charming hostess.

I was a little late, and made my apologies—in a little speech, composed as I came along. ‘I am afraid I am not up to time,’ I said, in a low voice; ‘but we soldiers are the serfs of our country, and must postpone to its service even such attractions as are laid out for us this evening. I *would* have come,’ I added, with meaning, ‘only *too* early, if I could.’

A rude laugh from beside me made me look round. There was Kinahan, Phillips, and some more of the regiment: she had asked *them*, with a want of tact, as it seemed to me, for they were hardly the sort of persons to suit her.

‘Why,’ said Phillips, ‘you never

told us that Miss Tupper had done you the great honour of inviting you to-day. I am afraid he doesn’t value the compliment half enough, Miss Tupper.’

‘Miss Tupper understands me better,’ I said, contemptuously, ‘and that I may have had reasons—’

‘I tell you what,’ said the sneering Phillips, ‘you thought you would come down and star it here—show off—talking about the regiment, without having any one to keep you in check. I saw the disappointment in your face as you came in. Ha! ha!’

‘Now, really,’ said Miss Tupper, ‘you must not be so severe. Mr. Sillopes is a friend and fellow-traveller of mine, and he must be treated properly. Let me introduce you to my uncle, Mr. Bolton.’ A stout old gentleman, whose clothes seemed to be hung on him—not fitted to him—and of whom no one was taking any notice, here came forward, and began to talk to me. He was very dull and pompous, but was anxious to please, and very proud of ‘my niece.’ ‘There are few women, sir,’ he said, ‘in her position. Such a fortune—such an estate. Lucky the young fellow she will choose.’

‘I think she is greatly to be admired,’ I said, ‘in every way. Such dignity, such grace, so much self-possession. Look at her here,’ I continued, with enthusiasm—‘with all these men round—a solitary woman—not in the least embarrassed—’

‘And why should she be?’ he said, testily; ‘there is nothing extraordinary in her entertaining gentlemen, with her uncle to help her. I see nothing in it.’

‘It is wonderful,’ I went on, not minding him, ‘how charmingly she does her part. As you say, he will be a fortunate man

whom she chooses. As a married woman she would be perfection.'

'Yes,' he said, 'if we could get her to choose some suitable young man of sense and ability—nothing particularly "tiptop," you know—it would be the only thing wanting.'

I think he looked hard at me.

'But, surely,' I answered, 'there are plenty to be found answering your description—plenty that would be proud—and delighted to be allowed the privilege of watching over and cherishing one, who—'

At this moment dinner was announced: and certainly at a most awkward crisis. But I had said enough, perhaps: and this old man would certainly report the warm and enthusiastic language in which I had spoken of his ward. She 'took down,' as it is called, Phillips, we following in a disorderly throng. Some of my companions quite went beyond bounds in their unbecoming jocularly, bidding me to 'go it,' 'call on my mare, and win,' and using other coarse phrases. Without adopting their phraseology, I was determined to let them see that I might follow their advice, after my own way: possibly after a way they might not like.

The entertainment was handsome. We were seated about a large round table, so that every one possessed the same advantages, and enjoyed the same publicity. The coming ball at Lady Hiantower's was eagerly discussed—the dresses, characters, &c.; and numerous suggestions were made. Our charming hostess was, it would seem, going, having been at last invited. She showed a charming coquettishness as to what dress she should wear.

'Nothing easier,' said Kinahan, boisterously. 'My dear Miss Tupper, it must be something that

suits your style. Mary Queen of Scots is not romantic enough, Joan of Arc too much of the country girl, Lady Jane Grey too humdrum. It should be some character more elegant.'

What would I have given for the cool assurance and *nature* with which Kinahan could say these things? Why should I not try? 'So I said, boldly—

'I think, Diana, or'—this with hesitation—'Venus, with the golden apple—'

Phillips gave a scornful laugh, the others tittered. But I could see the suggestion was not so displeasing.

'Oh! how absurd, Mr. Quentin,' she said, in some confusion; 'you want to make me ridiculous.' When a woman says a proposal is absurd, or, rather, uses the phrase, 'how absurd, you may be sure that she is secretly pleased with it.

'Mary Stuart, indeed!' I went on, quite emboldened; 'an old matron like that! No, nothing like the heathen goddesses; or,' I added—another brilliant idea flashing on me—'the very thing! Amy Robsart, the beautiful victim of Leicester.'

They all laughed again: but I could see in only a doubtful sort of fashion, for they had sense enough to see that their gibes only reflected on *her*.

'I suppose,' I said to Phillips, 'you see nothing comic in the idea of Miss Tupper's assuming the character of Amy Robsart.'

'No, no,' he said, testily; 'far from it: only you put it in such a ridiculous way.'

'I see nothing ridiculous,' I said, coldly. "'*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*'"

'I should say, if there was a costume in the world that would suit Miss Tupper, it would be that of Scott's heroine, and I

know exactly where a picture of it is to be procured.'

She looked at me with a half shy look—with a kind of coquettish glance. 'Really, it is so hard to decide,' she said. 'I do think Mr. Sillopes' idea is very good. Though, indeed, I don't know whether I shall go at all.'

Phillips, bitterly digesting the way I had put him down, now struck in, maliciously:

'Why do you always call him Mr. Sillopes, Miss Tupper? We always address him as "Colebs." He's known by no other name—in fact, prefers it.'

'Really!' she giggled. 'How funny! And what does that mean?'

'He's looking out for a wife. That's his profession—what he entered the army for.'

'And you entered the army,' I said, 'to pick up all you could. The Forager wouldn't be a bad name for you.'

I do not claim the credit of having made this retort *impromptu*. I had prepared it long before: though I frankly own I stood too much in awe of Phillips to let it off. But I was growing bolder by success. It had the happiest effect. They all laughed, and he looked mortified.

After dinner Miss Tupper came over to me for some private talk. 'How absurd,' she said—again, bear in mind my observation of the contradictory sense of the sex—'what you say about Amy Robsart, I am sure I should look too tall.'

'Not a bit,' I answered impulsively; 'that would give what the character wants—a charming dignity. Do let me send you the picture.'

'And what should I do for an Earl of Leicester.'

'Take me,' I said, 'it would be the proudest distinction, the most flattering honour. If, indeed, the

sustaining the character, *not merely at the ball*——'

As usual, interrupted at a crisis by the exuberant Kinahan.—But no matter, I was more than content. That night I had made enormous way. Take this for gospel. There is no woman, but is interested by expressed admiration. As we went away her eye rested on me with a kind of shy interest, and she bade me be sure to come and see her, 'to talk over that absurd idea of Amy Robsart.'

As we went home my companions were loud in their jeers and sneers. But Kinahan, though handling me as roughly as the others, honestly confessed, 'that Quentin was on the right side of the hedge,' while his peculiar slang signified that those who won might laugh. 'Quentin,' he went on to say, 'was more knowing than he looked,' was 'an uncommonly sly bird,' with other compliments. I really had got round 'that long storked-necked creature.' In my own room he came to me (for a cigar), and declared: 'I declare, Quin, you really tickled the old girl. She was looking at you all the time with a coy, languishing eye. She's up to romance, my boy; and I tell you the right way to carry her, would be to carry her off. A real post-chaise would be the thing, and she'd think herself in a novel.'

I smiled at this notion; but secretly I rather agreed with him. She was of that temperament; she would prefer herself being taken by storm or escalade. Kinahan's idea was too rough and coarse; but an adaptation might be tried, and the principle kept in view. I was determined to keep my own counsel, for I was growing distrustful of my friend; and I think my reserved demeanour rather irritated him. Possibly he was a little jealous. 'You're not an

Adonis,' he said, 'Cœlebs, because a skinny virgin squints at you. Don't give yourself airs, my boy; or reckon you have got a chicken before it is hatched.'

I answered coldly, 'I am not acquainted with any skinny virgin, as you call it; nor am I hatching—all in good time.'

On the next day I was out with her. There was certainly a strange softness in her manner—a gazelle-like shrinking, which showed that an impression had been made. I lost no time. I assumed a masterful tone which she accepted with docility. We settled it all. She was to go as Amy, the beautiful victim of Leicester, and actually agreed that I should play the part of her lover and protector, the licentious but enslaving Leicester. I had thought over the exigencies of the situation: Messrs. Sullian and Co., the eminent costumiers, had the dress of that historic character in stock, and for three or four pounds I could appear as the gallant Earl. It was settled, too, that 'Uncle Bolton' should appear as Sir Peter Teazle, in the court suit, flowered waistcoat of the period, and should act as *chaperon*. For I was to go with her in the carriage.

I could not help communicating these arrangements with a sort of triumph to Kinahan, asking, 'Does this look like business? tell me frankly.' He confessed that it did, though there was a half-battering way about even his most serious statements which I never quite relished. 'Ah, the posters are the thing for her,' he said, alluding, not to placards, but to the chaise and four.

'You should sound her on it, my boy.' This was, of course, 'his fun,' as he called it; but so mysterious is the female nature, that there really might be a grain of sense in the suggestion; and

if we lived in the days of Paladins, or even of the old romantic abductions, I don't know but that I might have at least dreamed over the notion. I had, indeed, the gratification of being enabled to write to my father something that would soothe his impatience. 'In a few days I shall be able to write to you something important. On Tuesday night,—the night of the ball—' matters will come to a crisis. The affair is everything that could be desired—estate—house—savings—no father or mother'—(this might seem an awkward expression as being addressed to him, but he understood perfectly)—'no, indeed, relations to speak of—(not complimentary to old Bolton). The thing only waits a crisis: which I hope will have arrived on Wednesday night. You see, after all, it was best not to be too eager on the other matters at first, and my earlier attempts were useful as an experiment. I shall send you a despatch the first thing on Tuesday morning, announcing that all is formally arranged.' This calm and simple statement ought to have had the effect of quieting his impatience.

But a grand blow was presently to fall on me. I was living in a sort of dream of expectation, quieted by a series of the daintiest little notes which would arrive morning, noon, and night. They were usually of this pattern. 'Dear Mr. Quentin,—Do come to me at once. I want so to consult you. Yours ever, L.—' Or, after this: 'Dear Mr. Quentin,—What will you think of me. But I can do nothing without you. I want so to see you. Yours, L.' This confidence was indeed encouraging.

Our intimacy was increasing every moment, and I suspect that Kinahan worked on the lady's emotions by highly coloured de-

scription of my passion. But only the day before the festival came the dreadful blow,—a letter reaching me from her to this effect:—

'DEAR MR. QUENTIN,—*Such* a thing has happened. What are we to do? only think, Uncle Bolton's sister is dangerously ill, and he has been summoned away by telegraph. What are we to do? I know no one to go with, that is to say, that I would ask to take me. It is a cruel disappointment, and I suppose we must give it up. Yours—L. T.'

Kinahan, who was with me at the moment, read what had happened in my blank face. I handed him the letter. As usual he took a cheerful view.

'Do; what is she to do?'

'Why, get some one else. Phillips would make his wife take her in a moment, if he was guaranteed the price of her dress. But it would be a delicate matter. Why not let her drive to the door, and we would charter some old dowager to take her.'

'Saved!' I cried, in delight.

'What a head you have, Kinahan,' I added, in real admiration.

'Why shouldn't you do this,' he added. 'Here are you a Lothario sort of fellow, going in professionally for the sex.'

'Oh, nonsense,' I said.

'Yes, but you are; and here is one of the finest opportunities. Seize it, my boy; and—seize her.'

'Where—how—when?' I said, a little bewildered, and yet almost dimly seeing what he was at.

'Carry her away by your impetuous ardour. Bear down all her objections and remonstrances; say it *must* be done; it has gone too far. She is committed. That the only way to save herself will be to seize the present golden

opportunity, while the whole town is engaged at the ball. You will never win her otherwise. She has a whole crowd of relations like old Bolton, who will never allow of a regular marriage. Come, take a fly at once and go out to her!'

I was carried away by his enthusiasm, and in a very short time had driven out to Tuppercourt. I found her in despair; and yet in a softened, tender mood, I at once entered on the plan that Kinahan had suggested, and, in hurried tones, addressed her. 'There is more in this than a mere disappointment about a ball. Things cannot go on as they are at present. We have all, enemies. People who talk, who are meanly jealous and suspicious of all that is virtuous and beautiful. Such persons we must checkmate.'

She raised her drooping eyes with a coy glance.

'Indeed I know that I have enemies—cruel ones, too. But what would you have me do? Advise me, and perhaps I *might* follow your advice. You are so clever.'

Here was an invitation. Kinahan had graduated 'M.A.' in the nature of the female sex.

'Do?' I repeated. 'Do? Why, trust—trust me, one who has long admired you; one who appreciates your charming nature; one who would be your disinterested protector against those wretched gossips and slanderers; if you would but give him the title to be so.'

She was greatly confused, but I did not like to speak too plainly for fear of alarming her.

'But, what title?' she said, faltering. 'The Earl of Leicester, do you mean?'

'Yes,' I said, 'your Earl, who will protect and shield you against them. Let us go, dearest Amy, if

I may so call you, and fix to-morrow night. Let us despise these vile slanderers and gossips, and give them the only satisfactory answer. Say, yes, divinest Amy. Can you trust yourself to me, and I will watch over you tenderly, and have a carriage here to-morrow night.'

'Oh, I couldn't. What would they all say. It would look so strange, wouldn't it,' she added, in natural hesitation. (How characteristic was that wouldn't it!)

'Not in the least,' I exclaimed, bearing down all opposition tumultuously. 'It has been done over and over again; the best, wisest, and most virtuous have done it. When they're driven into a corner by mean persecution, as we are in this instance, there is no other course open. Come,' I said, going down on one knee. 'Come, sweetest Amy, say yes. Give me the right to-morrow night to be your guardian, protector, and champion. I shall have a carriage waiting and manage it all.'

She smiled. 'Well, you are my faithful and loyal Leicester. But still I don't know what to say. They will all think it a little odd, and talk so. It will be asked and found out that there was no *chaperon* with us.'

I admired this philosophical way of considering it. But easily disposed of the objection. 'We don't want one. She would be in the way. But leave it all to me, I shall get over every difficulty. You send me away the happiest and most joyful of mankind.'

'No, no, I don't; and yet, I I don't know what to say. You are so eloquent and persuasive. I suppose I must agree. Let the wretches talk.'

I hurried away, having wrung this concession from her yielding

heart. I came home in a perfect flutter of excitement, and passing Kinahan, who was walking with another officer, just whispered to him quietly—'She has consented; all is settled.' He looked amazed, as well he might.

In my own room I sat down to collect my thoughts and arrange my plans. The latter were all mapped out in ten minutes. I had taken the responsibility and should go through with the business, according to the old conventional rules. There was a railway station in the place, but that would hardly suit the dramatic exigencies of the situation; indeed, to see even a newly-married pair drive up tamely in a chariot to a terminus, and get into a compartment, has always a very tame air. I could quite understand her wish to be carried away, with a charming violence, from the vulgar herd of tattlers and gossipers. And so a chaise and four there should be. No one would see the extra horses with the darkness; it gratified her little whim and did me no harm. I had everything settled before night. Wise in my generation, I thought I would not be too communicative to Kinahan, who was apt to view even the most serious subjects in a comic light. So I kept out of his way, almost shunning him, and proceeded quietly to make all the arrangements. I did not put too much faith in the consent I had wrung from her; and, indeed, the whole proposed proceeding seemed not a little ridiculous—as much an anachronism as a duel. When it came to be known people would laugh at us both. But still I would be there; when it came to be known in Kinahan's phrase, 'on the right side of the hedge.'

The chaise and four was rather a difficulty, and I almost found it impossible to arrange the matter

with Bullock, the corpulent proprietor of the Red Lion.

'Oh, come,' he said, 'this be one of the jokes you army-gents be always at. I don't want my po'chaise sent home with the panels stove in. Four 'osses, indeed! These larks don't do for a steady 'ouse like mine.'

'It's no lark I can assure you,' I said. 'I want the four horses for a particular purpose.'

'Wot for, then. Running away with young women is gone by. It's made a police business now. And as for galloping off in the night and bilking honest tradespeople, no 'osses of mine shall have anything to do with that.'

'There is nothing of the sort intended,' I said, with great dignity. 'I am not in the habit of doing such things. I require the postchaise for a respectable purpose which I choose to keep private. I am sure you do not mean to be offensive, but your remarks are scarcely respectful.'

'No offence—no offence,' he answered. 'I always looks to business; only I tell you this, sir, if there's any larking, or damage done to panels, cushions, or 'osses, the piper 'ill have to be paid smartly, that's all. What time do you want them?'

'At eleven to the moment. They must be waiting in the long lane, outside the town, and when they hear a whistle must advance out into the road where they will meet me.'

He looked at me with a broad grin.

'Well,' he said, 'here is a start. But no matter. I'll have 'em there. Mind, though, every scratch on my panels will be to the tune of a sovereign.'

The next day dragged by at inconceivable length. I was in a perfect fever. To avoid Kinahan I kept myself strictly enclosed.

But towards evening the irrepressible fellow came boisterously thundering at the door, swearing he would break it in if he was not admitted. I had no resource but to see him; but I determined to maintain a reserve.

'I would see,' I said, 'how matters would turn out. It was a mere dream. Elopements only took place in the novels.' He looked disappointed.

'You are throwing away a chance, my boy,' he said; 'you won't have so fine an opportunity again. The Amy Robsart and Leicester business won't come every night. Think better of it. We'll all stand to you.'

But I kept my own counsel. Though I had great confidence in his good-nature, it does not do to take all the world into confidence.

At last half-past ten o'clock arrived, and I set out on my daring expedition. I left the barracks cautiously, but, for all my caution—not unobserved—a party of the boisterous were standing outside in the square, and at once challenged me.

'Hallo, Coelebs! where are you off to? Where's the finery? Where's the Earl?'

'Now,' I said, 'no nonsense, I am in a hurry.'

'But we want to see you dressed and go off in the silk tights,' said Phillips.

I had the greatest difficulty in getting free from them. They were welcome to their joke, and I could repeat once my comforting maxim, that those who lost were welcome to console themselves by laughing at the winner.

I found a fly, and drove away in the direction of Tuppercourt. The way was not as private as I could have wished: for very soon I heard the sound of wheels behind me. This was, of course,

the vehicles beginning to go or return from—I was not sure which—the ball, which was somewhere in the district. We rolled on gaily, and soon came to the turn of a road, where the chaise was to be posted. I saw its lamps flashing: so far all was right. I dismissed the cab, and walked on to my chaise.

I was not quite satisfied with the imposing look of the four horses who made the equipage extend so long: no more than I had been with the lamps. The postilions, their boots, the pawing horses, and the old chariot itself, which was of a bright gamboge colour, seemed altogether too conspicuous. I was embarrassed by my own monster which I had called into being. This embarrassment was increased by the behaviour of the foremost postilion—he on ‘the leader’—who, stooping down, said, hoarsely,

‘You be the gent we’ve been waiting for?’

‘Yes,’ I said.

‘Cause I think we’d better be out of this at once if the job is to be done. The policeman’s been asking no end of questions, and I think he’ll be back here with another.’

‘Oh! nonsense. Our business is perfectly legitimate. Couldn’t you undo these horses, and ride on behind the chaise for a time, you know? We’ll have all the town after us.’

I think these fellows had been drinking, for the one on the ‘leaders’ said he supposed they could; but ‘blowed if he knew what the gentleman was after.’

I checked him sternly, saying that he was there to obey my orders, and had no need to know what any one was after. I got in, the leaders were taken off, and followed behind like a mounted guard; and, indeed, it occurred

to me that the effect must have been just as singular as it was before. However, it was quite dark, and no one could very well see.

I directed them to drive to the back gate of Tuppercourt. There I ordered the leaders to be re-attached, and to wait my signal. Again the impertinent postilion audibly ‘blowed’ himself if he knew what game was up next. But I took no notice, and walked up the avenue to the house.

I entered the drawing-room, and sent her up word. Word came down that she was just ready. I was in a perfect fever. Not five minutes elapsed before she appeared; and yet it seemed an hour. Then I heard a sustained rustling, as of strong silk, and down she floated, and, to my amazement, appeared dressed as Amy Robsart! and really looking wonderful.

She gave a start when she saw me.

‘Good gracious! Why ar’n’t you dressed? Where is the Earl of Leicester?’

‘You look ravishing,’ I said—‘enchanted. The dress becomes you to admiration.’

‘But why have not you yours? Half the effect will be lost. Go back and get it.’

‘But you know it would be hardly suited—those trunk hose and fleshings. There is a long night before us,’ I said; ‘and even now it is late enough.’

‘No doubt,’ she said, haughtily. ‘I have been expecting you this half-hour. Why, you are not even in evening dress. What does this mean?’

‘Exactly,’ I said, ‘dear Miss Tupper. But forgive me, if I make the same remark to you. Your ordinary dress would better suit the occasion: though it was a kind and delicate thought of

yours to let me see you in all your magnificence. Oh! you look indeed divine—ravishing.’

The spectacle certainly was magnificent: but at this distance of time truth compels me to state that she looked more like one of those tall, droll, male actors who, at the burlesque theatres, are fond of taking women’s characters.

She was out of humour, I think.

‘Where’s your dress?’ she said. ‘What’s the meaning of all this? Surely it was agreed. Half the effect of my dress will be spoiled. I could have got some one else if you had told me in time.’

‘Get some one else! Never,’ I said. I was greatly provoked by this whimsical behaviour. But women (see *Kinahan passim*) defied all calculation.

‘You had better go back and get it,’ she said, pettishly. ‘What do you mean by all this?’

I saw that she was bent on it, so a bright idea came into my mind. ‘Yes,’ I said, soothingly, ‘we can do so still.’

‘We! You you mean.’

‘With all my heart. Only let us go at once, so as not to lose time. The minutes are flying, and time is precious.’

‘Come down, then,’ she said. ‘We must only stop at your place for a few minutes till you dress. And pray don’t keep me long; it is very late as it is.’

‘Yes, yes, of course,’ I said. We were now at the door.

‘Good gracious! And the carriage? Have you brought no carriage?’

‘It is round at the back avenue,’ I said, ‘only a step from this. I did not wish to cause any talk or nonsense. You know what people are.’

‘Oh! get it up at once,’ she said, tartly. ‘Really, you are very odd, Mr. Quentin.’

I could not understand this

changed manner. But an acute observer of character had said that women ‘at such times affect to be singularly brusque and cruel to their adorers. Such, indeed, is a sign of passionate affection.’

The reflection quite reassured me.

A resolute manner was the proper tone to talk. So I said, quickly—

‘Come, having got so far, we cannot stand on ceremony. I ordered the carriage to wait there; and it is only a few steps off.’

Her maid interposed. ‘This is very odd,’ she said. ‘What does this gentleman mean?’

‘I am sure I don’t know, except to annoy and worry, and spoil my night’s amusement. I won’t move a step without the carriage.’

‘Very well; there,’ I said, impatiently, ‘I’ll fetch it.’

I did so. We got in, and set off.

‘Now,’ I called out of the window, ‘ply whip and spur, and make your horses smoke.’

He did so with a will. At last she was mine. At the corner of the road we pulled up to yoke on the leaders.

‘Why, what on earth is this for?’ she cried, in alarm. For the first time the serious character of the proceeding was coming home to her. The maid was going on in a very wild and absurd way.

‘They are putting on leaders,’ I said. ‘I knew the delicacy of your sweet soul, and how you would shrink from the publicity of a railway. Before morning we shall have got over fifty miles of ground. Then we can take the Great Western; and then—’

Both women shrieked together, ‘Let us out; let us out.’ The wretched lady’s-maid was at the

bottom of it all. She had interested designs of her own, and grudged me the prize. On their absurd vociferations, the men pulled up, and the wheeler rider got down deliberately, and came to the window.

'What do you mean? Drive on, fellow.'

'Deed I won't. What are you doing to the ladies?'

'Let us out,' they both cried. 'This man is carrying us off.'

'Indeed he shan't, my lady. Don't you be afeard. For shame of yourself to get decent 'osses and men for such a job. But the guv'nor suspected you along.'

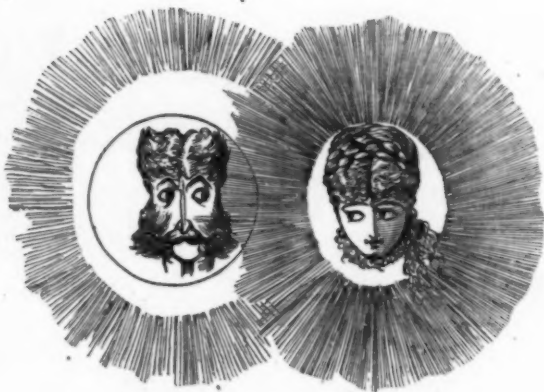
Two lamps now came flashing up—an approaching carriage. It was obliged to stop.

'Holloa! holloa!' said a cheerful voice. 'A wedding at this time of night. Why, what's this? What, Quentin?—What on earth game are you up to now?'

Was there ever anything so annoying. Of all people in the world—Kinahan—Phillips—in short, a carriage full of our fellows!

* * * * *

After this I gave up the game. And I really fear I shall be Cælebs the younger all my life.



THE GREAT ECLIPSE OF 1872.

THE FIRST VIOLET.

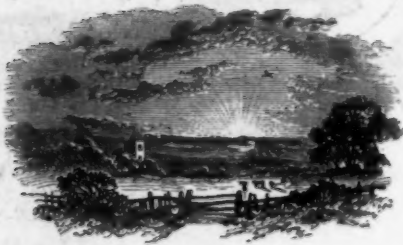
WREATHE not with flow'rets less divine
 Spring's first-born violet fair !
 If round its purer stem they twine,
 They'll wither in despair !

The primrose pale will paler grow,
 The daisy shine more bright,
 And from the marigold will flow
 Its flush of golden light !

But if thou wilt, then wreathe it now,
 Oh, maiden, young and fair !
 Wreathe it upon thy snowy brow,
 Amidst thy raven hair !

There may the spring-dawn's maiden queen
 Reign on a virgin throne ;
 There may no rival gems be seen,
 Blue-eyed one, but thine own !

JOHN SHEEHAN.





Drawn by C. J. Staniland.]

THE FIRST VIOLET.

VOL. XXI.—NO. CXXIV.

2 A

LITTLE POLLY PILKERTON.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS,

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE GENTLE LIFE."

CHAPTER I.

OLD PILKERTON—old by virtue of his being Polly's father—kept a saddler's shop in Long Acre. He was the third generation which had dealt in pig-skin, and had been duly apprenticed to his father, who, in his turn, had served his own father, and had been dutifully instructed in the art and mystery of making saddles. The Pilkerton saddle had a good name, and the artists who built them knew their own work. The shop was excellently kept—a pleasant large room, smelling of new leather, glittering with new bits, curbs and snaffles, and ornamented with a finely-carved head of a horse upon which the Pilkerton head-stall, worked curiously and with a multiplicity of stitches was exhibited to perfection. Here in old Pilkerton received his customers, gentlemen of large estates, masters of hounds, young heirs who took an interest in hunting and in horses, and fair ladies who would step from their carriages to see their side-saddles built.

Pilkerton was a handsome dark man on the right side of forty-five, bald-headed, well-shaven and with a neat black whisker. His manner was that of a sound honest English tradesman. Quickly deferential in taking orders, firm and manly in pointing out what could and should be done, and of that kind which generally won its own way. "Leave that to me, sir," he would say. "I have worked in leather more than five-and-twenty years, and I know what can be done with it."

The saddler was a widower; his

only daughter Polly, rising twenty, had been well educated at the Misses Blumberry's Establishment, near Bedford Square, was an adept at music, and had carried off two or three prizes in French. On the whole she was superior in accomplishments to the general run of tradesmen's daughters, and was soberly religious, being a Wesleyan and a Sunday School teacher.

As a rule, tradesmen who mind their shop find that their shop minds them, and have at their banker's plenty of money to fall back upon in the rainy day. But there are exceptions. Pilkerton was one. He was just as the story opens subject to a run of ill-luck. His banker had 'broken,' and, in breaking, broke some hundreds of smaller men into little pieces. The old saddler, however, weathered the storm. The shop did not look less bright and workman-like, but it had less stock in it: Pilkerton was in debt to his leather-seller, had to send in his own bills at an earlier date, and, instead of a clerk, Polly, who never saw her father's customers before, came into and ornamented the little glass case which served for a counting-house, and kept his books.

When sorrows come they come not single spies. Pilkerton, the saddler, tried to hold his own, and seeing a contract from a great house for saddlery, sent in—and blessed his luck when he got it!

The great Earl of Sangpur, a military nobleman who devoted himself to his regiment—the Red-legs, a dashing light cavalry corps

—determined to astonish the world. He had invented a new demi-pique saddle, and, as the Government looked coldly on it, had obtained from His Royal Highness the Commander-in-Chief the great favour of presenting the whole regiment with new saddles. H.R.H. looked upon this craze with a kindly pity, but the earl had proved himself a household soldier to the back-bone, and had once added 20*l.* per man to the regulation price of the horses of the regiment. Sangpur was beloved by the men, but hated by his officers, whom he put to all manner of expense.—‘What does a fellah,’ he once said, ‘do in my regiment with less than three thousand a year?’ and the question was unanswerable.

Messrs. Moses, Macbeth, and Company, the well-known army clothiers of St. James’ Street, took the contract. English society will not allow the real workers to do such large jobs without a middle man. Moses, Macbeth, and Company, thereon sent round to various saddlers, and Pilkerton—whose name stood very high—was selected to carry out the order of ‘Seven hundred and fifty saddles, as per sample.’

‘We’ve got the best man in the ’orld, mi lud,’ said little Moses (a red-headed Israelite with a Roman nose, and a heavy moustache, dressed in the most perfect civil-military costume). He had originally been a tailor at Chatham, but had prospered—in spite of two bankruptcies—which ill-natured persons said made his fortune.

‘Who is he?’

‘Pilkerton, of Long Acre.’

‘He’ll do,’ said the earl, who knew the saddler’s fame in the hunting-field. ‘Why then did he not give the order to Pilkerton? This is one of the mysteries of trade.’

‘We’ve got to find him the

money,’ said Mr. Moses, with a jeer. ‘These good workmen are so poor.’

‘You can draw, Mr. Moses, when part of the order is executed,’ said the nobleman, kindly.

Moses, Macbeth, and Co., did draw; poor Pilkerton did not. Like an old-fashioned tradesman, he liked to have his money in a lump, and had a pious horror of prepayment. His spirits rose with his luck, and he worked bravely at his contract.

The Wesleyan minister under whom little Polly Pilkerton sat was the Reverend Samuel Stoker, a pious man, who did not disdain to sport an American degree of D.D. Dr. Stoker had prospered, lived in Bedford Square, had a son who was in a good position in the Metropolitan and Provincial Bank, and a daughter, who, when poor Pilkerton lost his money, tried to help Polly by taking music lessons from her. Miss Stoker was very stupid but very good-natured, and Polly was delighted. So was young Samuel Stoker, who delighted in his second name of Keach—Keach Stoker, Esq.—he was named after a celebrated divine who had expounded the prophecies.

Keach Stoker was fond of music, went every Saturday to the Crystal Palace Concerts, and returned so late that he was never seen at his father’s chapel. It is a way with clergymen’s sons as well as with those of pious nonconformists. Sally Stoker, named Sarah after the wife of the patriarch, and born in days before D.D. ornamented her father’s name, mourned over this, and the preacher himself improved the occasion in his celebrated ‘Lectures to Young Men,’ on what Keach called profanely the ‘Double Event;’ that is, on ‘Making a Bank in both Worlds.’ But Keach dressed fash-

ionably, rose in his bank, shook his head when any one talked about marrying, said he was a beggar on five hundred a year—and so he was a beggar in slate-coloured kid gloves, splendidly cut trousers, a glossy hat, and unexceptionable boots.

This did not—this miserable state of poverty, I mean—hinder him from making covert love to Polly. When Polly gave her evening lessons, Keach, who was more than suspected of having been seen at theatres and promenade concerts, managed to stay at home, to the great delight of Sally and the D.D. He even joined in family prayer, carefully kneeling down on a scented pocket handkerchief. He was a universal favourite this young fellow, so sober, so staid, yet so awake to all the doings of the world. His father, in spite of his absence from chapel, and his presence in a new very high church where he could leave before the sermon, looked upon him with high favour.

Keach on his part coached his father up on the state of the funds, and had he advised Pilkerton would have saved him from his losses. When the D.D.'s congregation, upon the conclusion of a ministry of twenty years, presented him with a silver teapot and six hundred sovereigns, Keach took his father aside, made him spend all the six hundred in 'Egyptians,' and in two months after sell out at a premium which made six into eight. Then he split the eight into two parts, and divided them equally between 'Russians' and 'Turks,' both went up, the first the more rapidly; and when Doctor Stoker thought fit to retire, Keach congratulated the pater, as he called him, upon having a neat little 'thou,' a pet abbreviation with city men for a thousand.

'You were quite right to sell just

before dividends, pater. "Egyptians" don't stand quite so well' *ex div.*

'I don't touch the interest,' said old Stoker, 'it smacks of usury.'

'Quite right, sir,' said Keach, paring his nails; 'I will tell you always when to sell out—and when to buy in.' 'Why not,' he whispered to himself, 'it will come to me some day.'

So Keach Stoker, Esq., rising at his bank, and beloved at home, prospered with everybody except Polly Pilkerton.

The reason was not far to seek.

Almost every evening, except on those of the music lessons, young Benjamin Mansell, who also sat under the great Stoker, and made his boots, came round ostensibly to talk about the leather market and the price of skins, but in reality to look at Polly Pilkerton. Old Mansell and old Pilkerton were boyhood's friends, but the saddler consorting with a higher class of customer had learnt to look down on the bootmaker.

In his 'line' Mansell was as good a workman as Pilkerton, so there could be no reason for this show of pride. But when has Pride a reason? Old Mansell, a thoughtful man, like his son, and bootmakers in general, smoked his pipe, thought that his friend 'showed a stiff upper lip,' and said nothing. Young Mansell, on the contrary, felt the slight and would have resented it, but he was over head and ears in love with Polly. Love makes a man swallow a good deal. Ben thought that he was not fine enough, and therefore improved himself both mentally and as far as bodily adornment went. He was a fine manly young fellow; thoughtful and observant, and determined to win his way. He did not take a bad way to do it; Polly observed

his improvement, put his motives with the unerring perception of women when they are themselves concerned, down to the right cause, and liked him all the better for it.

'I can't think why you encourage that young shoemaker, Polly?'

'He is a bootmaker, father—and we are but saddlers.'

'Bootmakers and shoemakers are all the same—"snobs!"' said old Pilkerton, bitterly. The loss of his money had made him very cynical, and his darling wish was to marry his daughter to a man who was not only rich but above his own station in life.

'Snob or not,' said Polly, colouring at the insult, 'he is more polite to you than Mr. Keach Stoker.'

Both were thinking of the same person at the time.

'Ah! that is a man!' said Pilkerton, with gusto. 'He's sure to rise in the world.'

'I hope he will,' said Polly, tossing her head. That same evening she consoled young Ben by going out a walk with him round Russell Square and down by what old Pilkerton called the Fondling. She had a will of her own this Polly.

'Tain't quite a proper place for a young lady to walk, it's so donely,' said her father.

'Law!—and you and mother used to go a courting round there when London wasn't half so full,' said Polly, with a laugh, holding up her face for her father to kiss. 'I can take care of myself; and Ben and I have walked and talked together since we were ten. He's so clever, and so fond of poetry, and tells me such pretty things.'

This was true. Ben was an enthusiast, never talked of himself but when he had read some noble book or poem; and he was

always reading, and spouted it out to Polly—sometimes the people thought the young couple quarrelling; they had not come to *that* yet; they had not even made love.

But if Ben had puzzled his long head for a week—and he was no fool—he could not have hit upon a better way to catch Polly. When he recited in his grave tones and manly voice, and his good reading—taught him more by his own heart than by the 'Penny Elocutionist' he took in, and the quarter he spent at a Mechanics' Institute elocution class—Polly insensibly connected herself with the heroine, and Ben, as the nearest male creature at hand, as the hero, and her pretty eyes turned on his often glimmered with dewy tears under the gas lamps. Ah! those happy autumn walks; happy Russell Square, happy 'Fondling'—then so appropriately named. 'I say, Ben,' said Polly, taking hold of his arm so closely that it made him shiver delightfully, 'tell me more about the "Patrician's Daughter"—when Mildred won't have him, and she's in love with him all the time, you know—How stupid women are, are they not, Ben?'

'No, Polly; how can I think so when you can take all the points so well. They are *not* stupid. They think with their hearts.'

'That's why they break them so often putting 'em to an improper purpose. But, Ben, if a Miss Mildred—wasn't it Mildred rejected you on your being a—a—not a patrician, you know—what should you do, Ben?'

'I should break mine, Polly; if I loved her as I can love.'

'How's that?' said Polly, with a feigned funny little laugh.

'With all my mind, with all my heart, and with all my soul'—here he gave Polly's arm, quite

mechanically on his part, a tremendous squeeze, and the same delicious shiver ran through her frame—'and my neighbour as myself,' said Ben; 'that's in the Church Catechism which Doctor Stoker preaches against, Polly.'

'Is it?' said Polly. The tone of her voice was strangely altered. 'Gracious! there's ten o'clock, Ben! How late it is. What *will* poor father say.'

Somehow Polly felt rather guilty that night.

CHAPTER II.

The old saddler worked away at his contract early and late, and took so much trouble that each saddle was indeed furnished 'as per sample.' Seven hundred and fifty saddles take a good deal of work and leather; and work and leather have to be paid for.

Pilkerton was too proud to unburden himself to Moses, Macbeth, and Company, and it would have been of little use had he done so. He followed a well-known custom and made use of a little paper instrument; he, in the slang of Mr. Keach Stoker, 'flew a kite,' drawing upon his old friend Mansell, who was a 'warm' man, so far as a few hundreds can make one warm, for 'value received.' Mr. Mansell carried out the fiction like a man and a brother tradesman; some 'gentlemen' in the City discounted the bill, and Pilkerton was furnished with cash. Still, although the bootmaker had obliged his early friend with the use of his name, Pilkerton did not think it any more proper that the bootmaker's son should marry his daughter.

There was, therefore, some little coolness when Polly came home, but the saddle contract was so nearly done, the money was so

sure to be paid, and the saddler was too full of hope to be very full of anger.

So father and daughter found the time go very pleasantly, Polly thinking of the 'Patrician's Daughter,' and admiring her Ben when he recited 'Romeo and Juliet,' while the father stuck closely to work with his men, paying them liberally, too, until the whole seven hundred and fifty demi-pique saddles were delivered to Mr. Moses, who looked somewhat coldly at them, before Mr. Pilkerton, but was loud in his praises of the work to Lord Sangpur.

Had the saddler heard the words uttered by the Jew to the nobleman he would have been full of praise if not of pudding. However, the work merited all that was said by Moses, Macbeth, and Co., better saddles were never delivered, and my lord drew a cheque for the balance due on the spot.

Messrs. Moses, Macbeth, and Co., did not go and do likewise. They well knew the value of money, and sent poor Pilkerton wearily back with hardly a sovereign in his pocket. He had exhausted all his own money and the bill as well, and sat down, miserably enough, to wait. His contract had taken up his whole time; he had even offended some of his best customers, and he sat in his almost empty shop, lately so full of bustle, with his strong muscular hands spread idly before him.

'You're dull, father, to-day,' said Polly, apparently as gay as a lark.

'Idle men generally are dull.'

'Law! you're not idle, why you are always at work. All work and no play, you know; why don't you go and smoke a pipe with old Mr. Mansell?'

'I shall be thinking of that.'

bill—comes due next week,' sighed Pilkerton.

'Never mind, I've got all our accounts out, and if they would only pay up—'

'Ah! but my customers are all out of town, and that man, Moses; I never saw a Macbeth about him.'

'What a funny name—that's the same name that Ben talks about so beautifully,' said Polly to herself. 'They must pay father,' she said, aloud. 'It was a ready money job and at a ready money price.'

'Ah!' sighed Pilkerton; 'I do wish they would think so. You see, gentlemen of their persuasion have not got to do as they would be done by.'

'No; Ben says, they "do, or else they would be done,"' whispered Polly. 'I don't much like them. But there are good amongst them. Hallo! here's the postman, father—with a cheque.'

Pilkerton hurried forward and trembled as he took a lawyer's letter. He stammered, hardly knowing what he said, 'I can't have made a mistake with that fresh bill of mine; it hasn't come due, and this isn't a writ, is it, Polly?' Poor old fellow, he was too innocent of those useful bits of paper.

'Heavens, father! what is it?'

He had torn open the letter, and one glance at it was enough for him.

Messrs. Moses, Macbeth, and Co., could not pay him the money; but they did the next best thing they could, they put his debt in a schedule.

'Oh, Polly! Polly!' said the poor man, big drops gathering on his bald head—'bankrupt!'

'You, father!'

'Worse; the something Jews—I shall be sold up, stock, lock, and barrel frame and flap, head-

stall, and crupper!' Then he sank on his stool, and taking up his leather cutting knife, threw it on the floor with such force that it shivered like glass, and the blade flying out of the door and nearly cutting a dog's tail off. Then the good man, and he was good, swore a great oath that he would never work more.

'Be a man, father,' said Polly, trembling at his great rage, and yet somehow admiring him.

'Be a man,' said he; 'yes, and work for these desperate cheats, these fellows who take contracts, screw you down to the last penny, and then, aided by the law, cheat you out of that. These men who live in great houses upon the fat of the land and the lives of the poor. Be a man; be a slave; by heavens, the fellows who slouch about and won't work are right after all. How many an honest tradesman and his family have been brought to misery and starvation by such as these. Many a tender gal, and many an honest, hard-working mother, Polly—thank God, my wife's gone.'

'Oh, father, father, I never heard you say so before. What wicked men they are? May God forgive them. But, father, are you sure this isn't their misfortune?'

'Sure,' said the father; when it's the third time. My mates warned me to look sharp. Old Mansell did and he knows a thing or two.'

'Will you get anything, father?'

'What! when the lawyers have done their worst and had their pickings. No; do you suppose, Polly, as those gentlemen work for their own families or for their creditors? Why they are as glad when there's a bankruptcy as an undertaker is when there's a funeral coming off.'

'How bad the world must be, father?'

'Well, it is not a good one—just now. About half-a-crown in the pound is all that will come to me.'

'Just the eighth part!'

'Little better than the tythe of mint and cummin,' said the saddler, bitterly.

'And will that aid you? When does the bill come due?'

'In a week; the bankruptcy may be settled in six months.'

'Why don't you go through the court, too, father,' said Polly, with a sudden inspiration.

'What, I!' said the old man, a gleam of humour sparkling in his eye—'what I, Polly! no, I'd rather go and rot in prison, and be a journeyman again and make saddles; my right hand hasn't forgot its cunning, let the worst come to the worst I'll earn a crust for my gal.'

'Oh, father, dear old father,' cried Polly, 'come into the back shop and let me kiss you; you're all a man, father, and you always were.'

These good people, although so shaken to their bases, that they were quite subdued and spoke almost in a whisper, were not without a secret sustenance of hope. Polly counted up all the silver spoons, ran in and out her little glass case, and added up the bills again to try and make them a pound or so more in case she had made a mistake against themselves. Sought Mr. Keach Stoker, and asked him what was to be done when a bill became due, upon which he said, 'Meet it like a British tradesman.'

'But what if you can't, Mr. Keach?'

'Well, then, you may, perhaps'—he was going to explain about renewal, but Mr. Keach had a small opinion of a woman's knowledge of business and was silent—for a time—then he said; 'the bill's

dishonoured, for, of course, one's friends have been applied to.'

Polly blushed and remained silent; she had it upon her lips to ask some help of Keach, but her heart failed her. As for the banker's clerk he knew all about the failure of M. M. and Co., and knew very well that his father's old friend and disciple was put in great straits thereby. He loved Polly after his fashion, was jealous of young Mansell, but having his own little game to play would not hold forth his finger.

He, however, took care to warn the divine against lending money.

'You are too generous, father,' returned the son, with a slightly perceptible sneer wholly lost on the preacher. 'It is not to be expected that a man who subscribed a guinea to your testimonial should borrow a hundred. You may have such an application.'

'By my word,' said Doctor Stoker, a day or two afterwards, 'Keach, you are a prophet.'

'Keach also among the prophets,' said his sister.

'Father means *profits*. I have put all his money in the "Greeks," and they are moving up. You have not a penny to play with.'

'You guess what I was about to say,' said the D.D. 'Old Pilkerton came to me, and wanted to borrow money.'

'Like his impudence,' said Keach. 'What next, sir?'

Sally Stoker turned pale. She was about, at Polly's instance, to preface the same request. 'Oh! father,' she said, 'you could have done it. He is a most honest man.'

'But a falling one, sir,' said Keach. 'And, remember, never catch at a falling knife, or a falling friend. 'Tis a Scotch proverb, and indicative of that shrewd and cautious people.'

'Poor old man!' said Sally. 'Don't you remember, father, when he was much richer than we are, how he befriended you, and stood by you in the controversy about the sons of Noah.'

'Bother the sons of Noah, Sally,' said Keach. 'Are we not befriending him by taking music-lessons?'

'They are worth every penny we pay, Mr. Keach,' said Sally, indignantly; and she hurried from the room to have a good cry. Sally was the only one who felt for her friend.

In the meantime the poor old saddler and his daughter fell from hope to hope deferred, and from that into a profound melancholy as the time drew near. To almost the last moment he was ready to trust to any broken reed of hope rather than have his bill and his name dishonoured. He would have applied to his friend old Mansell, and have urged him to renew his bill, but he could at present only scrape together a few pounds, his debts seemed to be accumulating, and Stoker's almost severe rejection, accompanied with some of that religious advice which is so singularly unpalatable when offered without any relief of his petition quite unnerved him. He could not apply elsewhere; and he sat down to wait, as the Roman in his dungeon sat down to meet the assassin who was sent to despatch him.

'We must be sold up, Polly. If old Mansell chooses to put the law in force, what am I to do?'

Polly was almost as hopeless as her father. The only cheerful person about her was young Ben, who quoted generous bits of stage plays and poetry, and always declared that, by a poetical justice, the good man nine times out of ten came up all right in the play.

'Ah! but the play isn't the

world, Ben: I've heard say it's a great deal worse.'

'No, it isn't, Polly. You shall go to it when we are married.'

'Don't talk so, Ben,' returned Polly. 'How can you. It's hard-hearted it is, Ben; and father so troubled and cut up. I wish it was all over.'

'What, the marriage, Polly?' said Ben, drily.

'No, the dreadful bill, you cruel wretch, you. There's one comfort,' she said, flashing at him an indignant and reproachful look; 'you'll have to marry a beggar.'

'Law!' said Ben, 'is that all? She'll never be a beggar when she's my wife, and God gives me strength and health. Polly, don't cry. If that was all it would be well. And if I had thousands now, Polly, they should be yours.'

'I wish you had, Ben,' cried Polly, with a gulp and a sob.

'I don't. I'd rather you'd take me for nothing. All for love, Polly; for true love. It is the best thing in the world, and never wears out.'

And then, with true delicacy, born of his poetic temperament, Ben so comforted Polly that while he was there, at least, the young girl felt brave and comforted.

In the meantime Mr. Keach tried to press his suit, which was not of the kind of cloth that Ben's was, and offended Polly mortally. He, as Polly might have well known, might have helped her; but he made her love, in his obscure hints, a condition, and Polly flung away from him in disgust. And yet what a power has money. Polly's two lessons to Miss Sally Stoker produced some fifteen shillings a week; and this was the gold and silver band which held Polly to her engagement, and also to enduring Keach's presence.

That gentleman himself, mortified by Polly's refusal, gloated over

the coming misfortune of her father, all the more so as he had found out by ocular demonstration that Polly had preferred a plebeian young bootmaker to an aristocratic banker. The notion that they who made sound boots could be preferred to those who took care of other people's money in banks—which sometimes cracked, and let the money run out—was, he observed to himself, absolutely revolutionary.

'I'll be revenged,' said Keach to himself. 'I'll put a spoke into his wheel.'

When one is awaiting a great trial—and to the honest saddler this was indeed one—the sooner it is over the better. As the time approaches a sort of desperate courage is given one; and poor old Pilkerton, who would be a broken man on the morrow, was absolutely a brave and ready one on the evening before the fatal day. He balanced his books, made everything clear as daylight, performed the place of a boy, and swept up the shop and polished the snaffles and curbs himself, as if, with the presentation of the bill, one of the Commissioners in Bankruptcy and a file of policemen would walk into his little shop and declare him ruined.

'Now, father, it's all ready,' said Polly, ruefully, with a sad smile. 'Ready, if they come at six in the morning.'

'Umph! they are bound to present it before twelve.'

'Don't talk of it, father. Let us have some tea.' It was a little past six o'clock. Old Pilkerton was as obedient as a child. Polly led him in and poured out his tea, and stood up to say grace. Now all was to pass from him the old man looked round the comfortable room with a sigh and a groan, and thought how dear it was to him. His home had never looked

so well before; so homely, yet so neat and comfortably warm.

'We thank Thee for this, our daily bread,' said Polly, with tears in her voice.

'We have wept, and we have not been comforted; we have prayed, and we have not been answered,' said old Pilkerton, savagely.

'Don't, father,' said his daughter, imploringly. 'Gracious! what's that?'

Rap, rap. How both started. It was the postman, who was in the middle of the shop, with a registered letter. With trembling fingers Polly signed for it, and took it in. 'What's this, father?' she said.

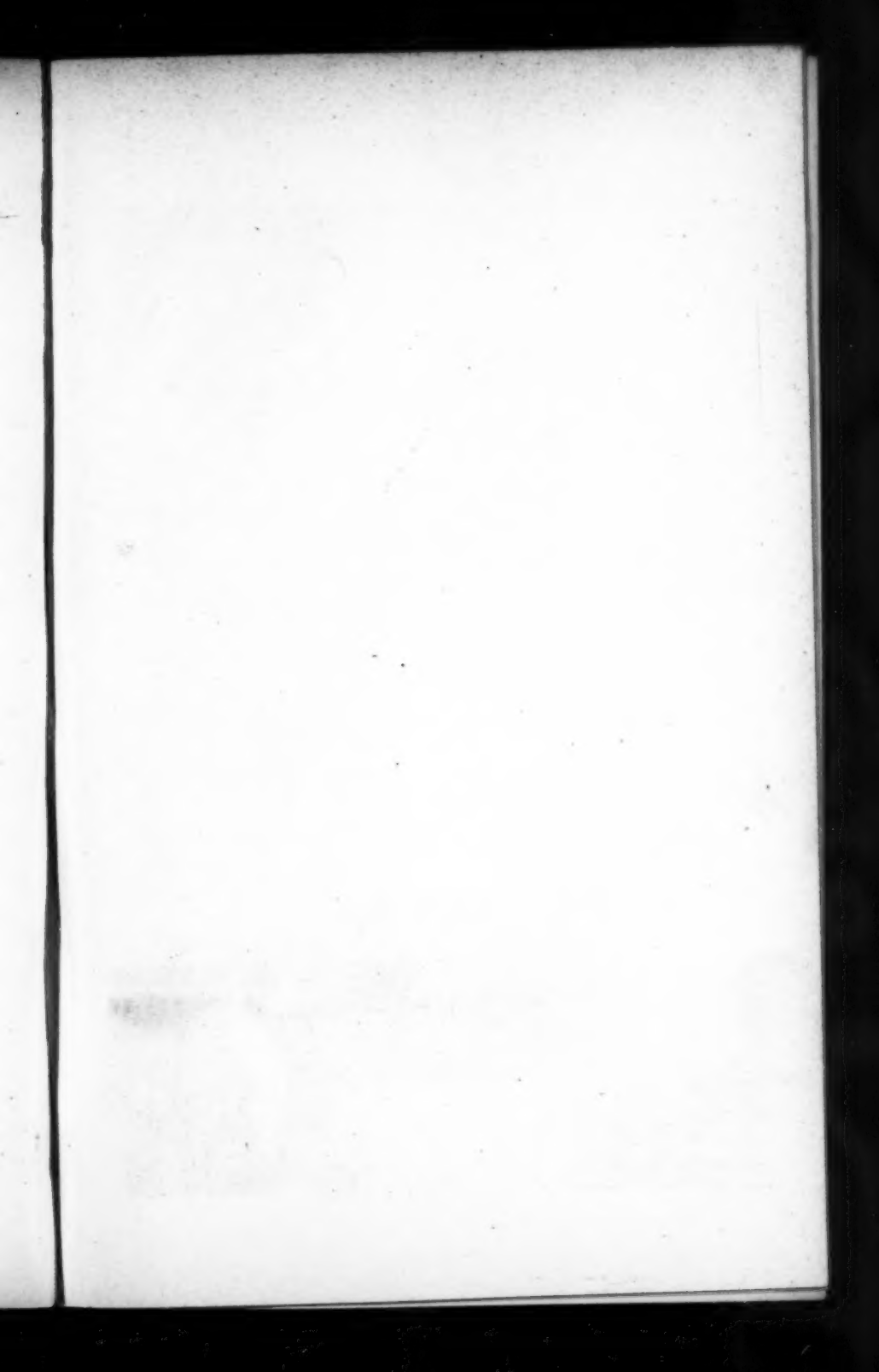
'Nothing; some pertikler order for saddles, with drawings; them swells think everything belonging to them valuable.'

It was just one week before Christmas Day; for bills will come due through feasts and fasts—except on the free days and the new Bank holidays—and sometimes new saddles were made up as presents; so the old man was not, perhaps, so far out.

'Let me open the letter if its business,' said Polly, forcing a cheerfulness, and sitting down after closing the glass door of the parlour. How nice and red and warm postmen do look. 'Do you like your tea, father?'

'Pretty well, my dear; perhaps it's the last we may have. Yes, they are drawings.'

'Oh, my! Oh! father, dear father, look here.' She opened the letter, found two stiff cards, which caused the old saddler to utter his remark, and then unwinding the string which bound them pretty tightly, opened six new crisp, charming-looking pieces of copperplate engraving—worth at least fifty pounds each, for they were bank-notes.





LITTLE POLLY PILKERTON.

[See Page 34.]

When old Pilkerton fully comprehended that they were real, he laid down his bit of bread and butter, smoothed his hands upon his apron, and fell down on his knees, crying, 'God forgive me for my wicked ways.' Then he gave way to a torrent of tears, in which Polly joined him, laughing and sobbing in the meanwhile, with one hand round his neck, or sometimes patting his back, while she said, 'Cry away, father; it will do you good.'

Christmas came and went; the bill was paid. Old Pilkerton wanted to rush at once to old Mansell, waving his money over his head; but Polly told him to bear himself like a man; to change some of the notes, and to await the clerk.

A very gentlemanly young man called, and presented the bill just about twelve; whereon Pilkerton took him into his glass cupboard, and Polly—'My clerk, sir'—produced the money from the desk, and it disappeared at once in a black leathern pocket-book chained round the young gentleman's waist. Then the old man got his bill, and, when the clerk was gone, tore it into fragments and vowed he would never take a dishonest man's bill again. His shop was not shut up. A customer more thoughtful than the post paid his bill, and put one old soldier in possession of some ready money; and, to Knoch's disappointment, Polly got another engagement, and determined to give up her friend Sally Saker—after finding out that it was not, as old Pilkerton long protested, that it must be that generous man the D.D. who had furnished the money.

'That's a mystery, father,' said Polly; 'and we will raise the money together, bit by bit, to pay our generous benefactor when we find him.'

'It's mysterious; it's providential. So was that old hat that tugging out so wonderfully well after. That gave us a hint towards K. Polly.'

'Ben said we should be helped,' said Polly. To which the father gravely replied, 'Benjamin Mansell was right—for once in his life.' It was curious that the opposition he had shown to that young man had not decreased, nor the admiration he felt for Knoch Stokes.

It was more than a week after Christmas that Polly, well-dressed still upon the grateful memory which had saved her father's credit and perhaps his life, came back with some fragments of one sum of the 1000 pounds. The weather being so rough, and Polly, who had, indeed, no new frock, found herself obliged to stand up for a season in her down-pour. She had, however, adjusted her clothes, looking modestly at some spots on her tail and handsome silk dress, tears while gazing her neighbor in her hand like a policeman's talon, when Mr. Knoch Stokes came up at the door. Polly could not refuse him offer of a shelter. Knoch was delighted.

He talked of everything; then laid up his nose. There had been some speculating in the South; and he had understood that as acquaintances of theirs—he would not say friend—had dropped something on the race.

'Dropped something. What is that?'

'Lost some money.'

'Who was it?'

'Why, nobody knew till Mr. Mansell, the book-maker.'

'Poor old gentleman,' said Polly.

'Wasn't the odd? it was the young.'

'What is there in betting that? Ben said he was sure of it.'



LITTLE POLLY PICKERTON

When old Pilkerton fully comprehended that they were real, he laid down his bit of bread and butter, smoothed his hands upon his apron, and fell down on his knees, crying, 'God forgive me for my wicked haste.' Then he gave way to a torrent of tears, in which Polly joined him, laughing, and choking in the meanwhile, with one hand round his neck, or sometimes patting his back, while she said, 'Cry away, father; it will do you good.'

Christmas came and went; the bill was paid. Old Pilkerton wanted to rush at once to old Mansell, waving his notes over his head; but Polly told him to bear himself like a man; to change some of the notes, and to await the clerk.

A very gentlemanly young man called, and presented the bill just about twelve; whereon Pilkerton took him into his glass cupboard; and Polly—'My clerk, sir'—produced the money from the desk, and it disappeared at once in a black leathern pocket-book chained round the young gentleman's waist. Then the old man got his bill, and, when the clerk was gone, tore it into fragments, and vowed he would never take a contract nor draw a bill again. His shop was not shut up. A customer more thoughtful than the rest paid his bill, and put our old saddler in possession of some ready money; and, to Keach's disappointment, Polly got another engagement, and determined to give up her friend Sally Stoker—after finding out that it was not, as old Pilkerton long protested, that it must be that generous man the D.D. who had furnished the money.

'That's a mystery, father,' said Polly; 'and we will rake the money together, bit by bit, to pay our generous benefactor when we find him.'

'It's mysterious; it's providential. So was that old bad debt turning out so wonderfully a month after. That gave us a hundred towards it, Polly.'

'Ben said we should be helped,' said Polly. To which the father gravely replied, 'Benjamin Mansell was right—for once in his life.' It was curious that the opposition he had shown to that young man had not decreased, nor the admiration he felt for Keach Stoker.

It was more than a week after Christmas that Polly, meditating still upon the grateful mystery which had saved her father's credit, and perhaps his life, hurried away home from giving a lesson at her new pupil's. The weather suddenly changed, and Polly, who had brought no umbrella, found herself obliged to stand up for a regular London down-pour. She had scarcely adjusted her clothes, looking most ruefully on some spots on her neat and handsome silk dress, meanwhile grasping her music-roll in her hand like a policeman's baton, when Mr. Keach Stoker came upon the scene. Polly could not refuse his offer of a shelter. Keach was delighted.

He talked of everything; then led up to races. There had been some steeplechasing in the South; and he had understood that an acquaintance of theirs—he would not say friend—had dropped something on the race.

'Dropped something. What is that?'

'Lost some money.'

'Who was it?'

'Why, nobody less than Mr. Mansell, the boot-maker.'

'Poor old gentleman!' said Polly.

'Twasn't the old; it was the young.'

'What, he take to racing—her Ben And he lose money at

‘racing—large, heavy sums, when her father was suffering.’ Polly’s head was, as she afterwards said, in a whirl.

‘Are you sure of this dreadful accusation, Mr. Keach?’ said Polly, sharply; for to her a gambler was a creature to be ever avoided.

‘We’re close home; now I will leave you; so sorry,’ said Keach, as they approached the door, rejoicing that he had planted a wound that would rankle: ‘sure, Miss Pilkerton. Oh! yes, we men of business are sure. I was told of the name. (Mr. Keach belied himself); and on the 18th of December—settling day—young Mansell, who had been saving up money, drew the whole out—six ponies—’

‘What are ponies, sir?’

‘Ponies? oh! I forgot; six fifty-pound notes—for I paid it him. Good-morning—evening I should say.’

The arrow sped; and a wondrous effect it had upon Polly. In she rushed to the shop; in again to the little parlour, and fell upon her knees, crying, ‘Oh! father, father! I’ve found out who our benefactor is—’

‘Hush! child; there’s that bothering young Ben in the shop, a-waitin’ upon some pretence or another.’

Out rushed Polly, dragging in Ben astonished and alarmed. ‘What is it?’ he asked.

‘Ben,’ said Polly, beseechingly, ‘promise me you will never tell me a falsehood.’

‘I never did,’ said Ben, ‘and never will.’

‘Then you sent the three hundred pounds—’

‘And saved my honour,’ cried old Pilkerton, taking hold of both his hands.

‘And won my heart,’ said Polly, falling on his neck, and kissing him.

‘Well,’ said the struggling hero, rather ruefully, and blushing at his secret doings having been found out, ‘I thought I’d won that before, and I wasn’t going to be beholden to money; for isn’t a heart of gold worth more than a bag of gold, Polly?’

‘You shall have both, Ben. One you’ve got, you darling; and when we’ve paid you the money you shall have the other. And Ben,’ said the earnest girl, her heart bounding with joy, ‘I’ll work my fingers to the bone before—’

‘I’d rather have them as they are, Polly,’ said Ben, seizing her pretty hands and covering them with kisses; and provided you and the governor are willing, I’ll take them to-morrow.’

* * * * *

Would you be surprised to hear—the form of question is original—1. That Polly married Mr. Ben Mansell, and that old Mansell came down on the occasion.

2. That Lord Sangpur came to congratulate Mr. Pilkerton on the new saddles of her Majesty’s celebrated regiment the Redlegs, and hearing then and there of his misfortune, vowed to make it up to him somehow, and really did so.

3. That Messrs. Moses, Macbeth, and Co., finding many tough customers in their third bankruptcy, paid in full and got it annulled.

4. That Messrs. Pilkerton and Mansell are celebrated saddlers by appointment to H.M. the Q—and H.R.H., &c., &c.

5. That Mr. Keach Stoker was a little too venturesome with the ‘Greeks,’ and that the funds of those islanders let the D.D. in. If you are, I must have told my story very badly.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

THE passion for diamonds is, no doubt, deeply engraven in the human breast. Fair women always covet them for their adornment, and the capitalists of all ages regard them as the best embodiment of 'portable property.' What scenes of glorious splendour, what traditions of eminent families, what brilliant pages of modern life are associated with diamonds! Prince Esterhazy, in his diamonded dress, seems always to glitter as the *ne plus ultra* of fashion. The discovery of the diamond fields of South Africa must have awakened a flutter in many a gentle bosom to whom gold would have seemed comparatively sordid. For while gold increased diamonds became scarcer, and more and more the most precious of family heirlooms. And now comes the news, that in a small district of South Africa they are being plentifully gathered, that the supply and demand will be soon balanced, and that diamonds are fast finding their way into new markets. And while the first vision is that of crowded drawing-rooms, where loveliness glitters and flashes with these living gems, a second thought carries us away to the arid desert where, beneath the intolerable sun, the diamond-hunters, ply their eager quest, under that impression that old Johnson so well described as 'the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice.'

Certainly the scene, as it is described to us, is a most remarkable one. It is, though of course in a minor sort of way, a reproduction of much that was witnessed in Australia and California. But the scene has a very peculiar character of its own.

The doubts that at first existed about the fields have been dispelled. There really are diamonds to be found; and these diamonds are not of any inferior kind, but of a faultless sort. They are as numerous as those of Brazil, and of, perhaps, even a better kind. And the Cape of Good Hope is so much more accessible than any of the gold-bearing regions. It is no wonder that men have eagerly caught at the brilliant lures set before them, and that companies have been formed for the purpose of systematically working the ground. Men who were well known in the smoking-rooms of London clubs, who shot pigeons at Hurlingham, who dined at Richmond and Greenwich, have gone forth to work with bare arms in the short scrubby inland bush. The Englishman's two strongest incitements, the love of adventure and the love of gain, lead them forth. In a country where so much strength and energy lie fallow, because all the markets are overcrowded, any sudden splendid chance is sure to elicit a host of men who are prepared to encounter peril and labour. Men, for whom the chances of life are lessening, clutch at such new-born hopes. There is no doubt that the mines are extremely rich, but still the peculiar character of this kind of adventure is to be borne in mind. It is very different to gold-digging, much more uncertain and precarious. When men settle steadily down to gold-digging it is tolerably certain that every one will be able to get a living, but the chance of finding diamonds is pretty well an even toss-up. Half the men are disappointed; and, in fact, no man ought to go

out who cannot run the risk of disappointment.

Certainly the discovery of the fields has come at an opportune moment. The jewelled portion of the community had really been getting very anxious on the subject of diamonds. They were first found in India and in Borneo; but it is a curious fact that, though people talk of the diamonds of Golconda, none were ever found at Golconda. Stilton cheese is not found at Stilton, nor Damascus sabres at Damascus. Many people depreciate the Cape diamonds; but it must be remembered that when Indian diamonds were the rage there were considerable attempts to discredit and depreciate the Brazilian diamonds. Scientific writers declared that the world was coming to an end of its store of diamonds. The mines of Hindostan were exhausted, and the period could easily be calculated when the Brazilian districts would be exhausted. From time to time there had been rumours of fresh discoveries in diamonds. It was thought at one time that they would be found on Count Demidoff's estates in Siberia; and, in fact, a number of small ones have been found in the Ural districts. Under these circumstances the value of diamonds increased very greatly. While the amount of gold indefinitely increased, and the amount of diamonds was stationary, diamonds must needs go up. It transpired in a court of law some years ago that the value of diamonds had increased to the extent of from forty to fifty per cent. The result of the recent discoveries must be, that, at least for the present, diamonds must deteriorate in value. Messrs. Debenham, Storr, and Mortimer sold about thirty thousand pounds' worth the other day. Among the rest, a brilliant of 20 carats

(cut from a 39-carat stone), and of the utmost purity, was put up. Though the competition was brisk it did not attain to 2,100*l.*, the reserve price. Yet, prior to the Cape discoveries, it would have found a ready sale at 5000*l.*, or more. If this state of things continues it will involve a serious depreciation of property to the holders of diamonds. A correspondent from the 'diggins' writes to us: 'In the Brazils a 10-carat diamond is considered something extraordinary, but here diamonds of 20, 30, and 40 carats are frequently found, and a few upwards of eighty.' He adds, however: 'The really paying ones are few and far between. What we want are companies with capital to work them. To take the whole at an average it could never pay single workers.' It is quite possible to purchase diamonds at too high a price. Before now gold and silver mines have been abandoned because the vein of gold or silver did not suffice. I heard the other day of a man who made a journey to take a philosophical survey of what was going on, and contemplate his new race for wealth. He succeeded in potting a few diamonds, and then rode contentedly away. His great anxiety was that actual starvation appeared an imminent peril to many; that they must needs get 'clammed,' to use his forcible Northern dialect; and that a mere poor man has little chance of benefiting himself out there.

The passion for the speculative seems to have seized the people of the Cape. Every way it may be a great thing for them. The political importance to the colony is immense, and was dwelt on in a recent debate in the House of Lords. It may have much to do with a change in colonial institutions; so closely are all interests

united. We have heard of a man who had a farm of twelve thousand acres, and offered it all for the price of a claim ten feet long by thirty broad. Nearly five hundred pounds was given for a bit of ground seven feet by thirty. We are not surprised at this when we hear of a man picking up no less than forty diamonds in a single day. Many men find five, six, or seven diamonds in a single day. And the district is, at times, described in frightful colours. It is a howling wilderness. It seems, indeed, that the more desolate the place, the better is the chance of obtaining diamonds. The dust is frightful. You must pay for all the water that you use, and each bucketful has its price. There are no sanitary arrangements, and this is bad enough in the hot weather of a hot climate. The bullocks die in hundreds, and their carcasses pollute the air. And now a new danger seems to threaten the diamond-hunters; and it comes from home. There appears to be reason to suspect that a system of duplicity exists to enhance the value of claims by simulated discoveries of the precious gems. Diamonds are easily imitated. The single test is, we believe, the hardness. Artists have a composition called *strass*, to which they can give an adamantine lustre, and quartz will take a polish also. We are sorry to hear that Birmingham, which is accredited with supplying idols to India, is sending out imitation brilliants, that its 'paste' sham may do the work of real stones. We should not be surprised if something very like 'lynching' were the result of the discovery of any such attempt. It is impossible, also, not to reflect that there is something very unsatisfactory in diamond seeking. The most favourable result is simply the stumbling upon an accident; there has been

no real culture and no real production. A man may find diamonds worth a certain amount of money, but regular work at home may have shown more favourable results, and he has to throw in the amount of the expenses, and, frequently, the terrible expenditure of his energies. Then the discomforts, and deprivations, and the laboriousness of the life have to be considered. Any one who has much experience of men who have 'roughed' it in the bush, or in far travel, knows how often the days of adventure and hardihood have laid the foundation of permanent disease. The most successful man has deserved his success, and the least successful deserves our pity. We have heard sad stories of poor slaves who have worked in Brazilian diamond mines, and we are afraid that something not dissimilar is to be told of some of our countrymen in South Africa.

The glowing subject of diamonds is fruitful with inexhaustible reminiscences. I heard of a man who was once breakfasting with Lord Macaulay, when the conversation turned on the subject of diamonds. Macaulay possessed a marvellous knowledge of details, which he had pride in exhibiting. A friend of mine once saw him moved to the absolute shedding of tears because he could not recollect something that he was about to quote. The conversation turned on the regalia of different thrones, and Macaulay went from diamond to diamond, with his marvellous memory. He would, of course, speak of the famous Pitt diamond, which was brought by an Englishman into Europe and placed by Napoleon in the hilt of the state sword of France; of the great Austrian diamond; the great Russian diamond, and of a perfect mountain belonging to the crown of Portugal, which is said to be worth nearly

six millions. There is a counter-statement, that this is merely a fine colourless topaz; and the Portuguese sovereign does not submit the case to any scientific arbitration. No diamond has a more marvellous history attached to it than the Koh-i-noor, which has been recut, with increased effect, since the time of the Exhibition. I dare say many a diamond hunter wonders whether his rare happy lot will ever alight upon a gem that shall be renowned as the great gem of the regalias. Almost countless are the stories that might be told about diamonds. The Diamond Necklace belongs both to history and romance. In the 'Moonstone,' a popular novelist has apparently made some use of the history attaching to the diamond purchased by the Empress Catherine. It was like a pigeon's egg, and formed the eye of an Indian idol. It was pillaged by a deserter from the French service, who had managed to get himself installed as a priest in the idol-service. The empress gave him nearly a hundred thousand pounds down, and a large annual income. The famous Austrian diamond, once belonging to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, was long thought a bit of rock-crystal, being of a beautiful lemon-yellow colour. It was sold from a stall in the market-place of Florence, and fetched a few pence. Then there are stories about the cutting of diamonds. An infinite deal depends on the cutting. The Koh-i-noor is said to have lost three-fourths of its weight in the cutting. A late philosopher wanted a piece of diamond for a philosophical purpose. He saw a large mass in the hands of a jeweller, which seemed hopelessly deteriorated by a large flaw which occupied nearly the whole of the

interior. He paid a large sum, himself superintended the cutting, took as much as he wanted, and having the rest properly cut and polished, sold it back to the jeweller for double the price he paid for it.

And yet one might well moralize on the diamond. It is only carbon, after all. It is soon calcined to ashes. It is simply a bit of charcoal, which will yield to the rays of the sun and pass away in a noxious vapour. It was long suspected that the diamond was inflammable; and our great philosopher, Boyle, showed that, under great heat, it was dissipated in acrid vapour. It must have shown a considerable amount of philosophy when people sacrificed their diamonds for the cause of science. But let us sum up practically what we have to say of the real character of the diamond fields. It is necessary to warn men against the exaggerated character of the reports from the fields, especially as the present tendency is to credulity. It is the old proverb over again, that 'all is not gold that glitters.' The diamonds are to be found, but they are not to be found always, nor by all men. Then there is the positive fact that they are depreciating in value. Then there are other drawbacks which have been suggested in these brief remarks. In fact, there is only one class of men who can undertake the work with much real confidence. These are men who have a few loose hundreds to spare, who may be able to maintain themselves through many months of ill luck, until they can strike a balance on the proceeds of at least a year. But then comes the question whether they might not have laid out their money upon some better and safer projects at home.



THE BOAT-RACE.

A NATION'S pride, by a river's side,
Wavelets which gleam as gems—
At lightning rate the arrow eight,
Threading the sinuous Thames ;
A jubilant shout, a welcome cry—
They come—they are here—are gone !
And the champion shallops flash swiftly by,
Or ever the day be won.

A golden sun in a laughing sky,
And a laughing river below,
And deep acclaims from the bank hard by,
And shouts of ' Oxford row !'
And the plaudit clear for Cam, I hear,
And ' three to one,' also !
But which is to front and which to rear—
Whether dark-blue there or light-blue here,
And what imparts that echoing cheer,
Are facts I do not know.

As sings the poet, ' a glorious minute,'
As those myriads onward sway ;
' For a nation's host has but one heart in it,'
One paramount thought to-day.
And eye-balls strain, and stout hearts quiver,
As there, by the eastward bend,
The long oars vanish adown the river,
And the cheers announce the end.

Such is the vision on which, in trance
Wrapt prophetic, I now can glance.
One little fact I forgot, though, which next I'll
Duly record, that the year is bissextile :
Hence, you will note on these Thamesine waters,
The boats are impelled by the muscular
daughters—
Not sons of old Isis, and Grants, the hoary—
To the ladies and leap year, then long life and
glory !

T. H. G. E.

SIMLA SOCIETY.

A LADY once asked with much apparent artlessness, whether Sierra Leone and Ceylon were really different names only for the same place. Now, that sinning lady is not brought to the bar here to receive a due measure of punishment for her naughty cynicism; she is only called up for a moment as the chosen type of a large number of her fellow-creatures. She knew perfectly well that Sierra Leone was African and sterile, particularly fatal to bishops, proscribed to the white man, and overshadowed by deleterious miasma, while Heber's missionary hymn had long since taught her of Ceylon's fairy isle and its spicy breezes. This lady was a true disciple of a large school who won't know anything about India and the East—a school whose singular affectation in pleading ignorance of things Indian has so wide a teaching, that the philosopher, if the crooked ways of wayward nature really trouble him, is at a loss to account for such overacted mannerism.

A debate on Indian affairs in the House of Commons soon thins the members' benches; editors are thrifty in assigning space in their journals to the affairs of our Eastern Empire, and generally apportion but a small pittance to chronicle a famine whose victims approach the population of Ireland for multitude, or a pestilence along whose path the dead may be reckoned in thousands. From the nursery to the grave, many care only to believe in India as a garden of pagoda trees bending beneath the weight of gold, mohurs as large as saucers, beautiful cashmere shawls to be got for the asking, and overrun

with fierce hairy cousins burnt quite black, and showing an uncommon predilection for Indian pale ale.

When the white population of India was much smaller than it is now, and those who sojourned there were for the most part members of a limited number of families, whose interest or connection with the Old East India Company enabled them to procure appointments for their younger sons in the two branches of the Company's service, the difficulty of exciting an interest for India in the public generally may have been great; and to awaken feelings of sympathy for men or occurrences so far removed, and so foreign from anything in their own experience, may have deterred many from attempting to gratify curiosity alone when they knew they should fail in touching the heart.

But surely all this has enormously decreased now, and the barrier to the interchange of thought and sympathy between England and her colonies is removed. The English in India are no longer the servants alone of a great company drawn from a small and exclusive number of families. Scarce a home in the land that has not a younger member or two there now. Near five thousand miles of railway intersect the country, designed by English engineers, and, with the aid of native labour, carried into execution by English artificers. The bazaars of Calcutta and Bombay are filled with the tradesmen of London, while enormous warehouses, crammed with calicoes and cottons, rise in all the great cities. The Wynaud forests resound to

the axe of the settler, whose all is invested in the growth of coffee; while the Kangra Valley and the land of Assam are under the watchful care of European tea-planters. The wire links the east and the west together; and the dreary message, which found its way home by the Cape of Good Hope after a six months' voyage, is now flashed across in as many hours.

Ah! what patience our forefathers out there had in those days, waiting often for a twelve-month for replies to messages sent home; it seems incredible to us now, yet it was only too true. Think on the manners and customs, and forms of religious faith, of those one hundred and fifty millions of dusky beings who inhabit that great empire stretching from the mountains of Tartary to the shores of the Indian Ocean: the descendants of dynasties older than the proudest in Europe, their magnificent courts and enormous wealth, their new hankering after the civilization of Europe, and their constant appearance at our Court and in our places of public resort. Are these things beyond our grasp now? No, they are truths and facts brought home to our hearths, and we can no longer say that time and place are too remote to awaken our sympathies, and that India has too little connection with ourselves and our associations to tempt us to grapple with it more earnestly, and give heart as well as ear to its welfare and to the happiness of its people.

Although the spark of interest is still so faintly shining, and diffidence still holds her own, is there no spot out there from which streaks of sunlight shine, which is in unison with our deepest sympathies? Surely, the word SIMLA may have some magic

charm in it—may awaken more than a passing interest in the welfare of our friends still there. Does not the Benedict remember that the days of his singleness were sealed there? and the diplomatic mamma, does she not remember the victories embroidered on her colours there, in the days when her 'quiver was full of them'? But Hymen held his court there then; weeds grow in his courtyards now.

Simla—though Mussoorie and other smaller lights now glimmer in the hills—is the most fashionable resort of Bengal and the upper provinces of India from April till October, and August is about the height of its season. Situated in the hills some seven thousand feet above the sea level, and within sight of the glaciers of the lesser Himalayas; built on the summit and around the slopes of a mountain clad to its summit with the pine, the cedar, the larch, and the juniper, there is no more desirable spot throughout the land. In former days it was hard of access, and only those who had money and time found their way thither; but now the railways from Calcutta, and even from Bombay, reach to within thirty miles of the hills beneath; and a four days' easy journey from the 'City of Palaces' will carry you to this mountain retreat. There is Burra (great) Simla, and there is Chota (little) Simla, Elysium and West End Simla, Choura Maidan and Jakko, Merlin Park, and the Valley of Annandale, wherein lies the racecourse, and cool groves shaded with the *Cedrus deodara*, supposed to be the Cedar of Lebanon. The Union Jack floats over Peterhoff Hill, the summer residence of the Viceroy, and in the neighbourhood are clustered Beatsonia, Inveram, and the Boorj, places of habitation for his Excellency's staff.

The exodus from the plains of Hindostan commences early in April, and the traveller on the dusty road between Umballa and Kalka at the first spur of the hills, may count the shigrams or gharries by scores; now being urged along by constant castigation applied to the lean horses, which are harnessed with traces of rotten rope, and presently drawn by bullocks through the bed of a river, the water covering the axletrees. In these vehicles are reclining papa, if he has the luck to escape in the first flight, mamma and her offspring, all making for Simla.

The viceroy, the lieutenant-governors, the judges of the high courts, the chief commissioners, and that anomalous tribe of generals and colonels who, turning a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer, repudiated amalgamation, and chose rather to feast in idleness on the fat of the Indian revenues—these all find their way there early, and, with some exceptions, remain till the close of the season. The lesser civilians do not show in great plenty, while the military officers generally have but a sixty-days' sojourn, descending then to the plains when the heat is fiercest, to relieve their parched and semi-roasted brethren.

In August all is merry. There is the club ball, the race ball, and a lot of little ones besides. Then there are picnics, races, and excursions to the neighbouring snows: the most thrilling incident in these mountain excursions is perhaps crossing the turbid waters of the Beas (one of the five great streams of the Punjab) on inflated bullock skins, which exactly resemble the carcase of the entire animal, minus his feet; and the wonder is how the manufacturers got the bones out, for

neither cut nor seam can you discern in the hide anywhere. There are bazaars for religious charities, presided over by some honourable judge's lady, who, with her assistant young ladies, fleece, without remorse, all bachelor visitors. The Rotten Row of Simla is called the Mall, whereon fair equestrians sweep round the sharp curves at full gallop, knowing well that there is no Hyde Park peeler at hand to prosecute them for riding furiously. The most fearless of these gay cavaliers—the flying brigade, as they are called there—hearken not to the cries of man, neither make way for the approaching jampan, but, regardless of life and limb, surge furiously round the Jakko wall. These would-be leaders of men possess neither the power of Lais nor the charms of Aspasia; and some of them would scarce find admission within the portals of the Temples of Juno. The refined, and the more youthful of Simla, are not found in their ranks.

The club overlooks the Mall, buried in the trees up there; and from that sacred fane, tearing themselves from whist and from billiards, the flower of the bachelors descend, slowly sauntering along, or listlessly leaning over the treacherous rails, or, peradventure, gazing into the abyss beneath. Mingled with all this are numberless jampans and janty dandies—hammocks slung on poles—borne along by six or eight native bearers arrayed in flaunting apparel. His Excellency's jampan-bearers are habited in royal red, Judge Snout's lady is carried by darkies in green tunics and crimson knickerbockers, while Colonel Qui Hi has a taste for black with gold facings; all colours may be seen, but perhaps the adipose Bengalee Baboo trot-

ting past with ten coolies grunting aloud as they go, and resplendent in their orange and green vestments and garish turbans, command the greatest attention.

'Tis evening now, and the governors, the judges, the generals, the commissioners, and the chief secretaries, have all disappeared—gone home to dinner, if such great creatures are really mortal—and the Mall is deserted, or left to ayahs carrying home their little charges. There are dinner parties at Ellerslie, Courteen Hall, Bentineck Castle, The Dixee, and at Torrentium Retreat; and later still, the fashionable world are again on the move, some in jumpans, some in dandies, in full trot to the opera, or are 'at home' at the Tendrils, Choura Maidan, or at Waverley, Elysium, or Tara Hall, or Oakover Hall. The evening wanderer resting on the hill-side of Jakko may view numberless lights peeping from little retreats everywhere about him, and all rejoicing in names as meretricious as those we have recorded; for know, O reader! they don't call a spade a spade up here. These halls, these villas, these retreats, are only humble one-story buildings, sometimes constructed of wood, and painted the colour of an English penny postage stamp. Mrs. Malaprop has been up there, and has christened them all.

The young ladies of England fancy they do know one thing about India. They have been told that there are twenty gentlemen to one lady in every ball-room, and even the chaperons can fill their cards for every dance if they please. Vain belief! True, perhaps, in small stations, where the commandant's wife and the magistrate's lady (generally her enemy, or what sounds softer, her rival), with perhaps a third interloper in the form of a sister-in-

law, form the sum total of society; but at Simla things are far otherwise. Ranks of young ladies, four deep, may sit out the entire evening without a partner unless mamma is a very excellent general. And do young ladies marry in India now? This important question must be answered in a new paragraph.

Although young ladies flock to India year after year in increasing numbers, marriage among them is on the decrease; and the anxious mother has now to hurry her offspring to the cool hills year after year to preserve them from the effects of a long Indian residence. Even this will not spare her the anguish of observing complexional indications of too long an exile from home; with feelings of mortification she becomes aware that her daughters are classed with 'fourth or fifth season girls.' Beauty fades rapidly out there, the once ruby lips and ruddy cheeks of the English girl soon give way to an ashy paleness and an angularity of contour, which saddens more hearts than the mother's.

In other days the soldier and the civilian alike, when bound for India, went thither with contented minds, resolved to make that land their new home, and contentment was happiness to them. A long six months by sea separated them from England, and they ceased to yearn after homes they had quitted for perhaps twenty years. In those times a rupee was two shillings in every sense, and the wants of life were very cheap; the civilian's pay was always good, half the officers of a regiment were on staff employment drawing handsome emoluments, and subalterns shared the plunder in the regiment by commanding three or more companies at a time. In a word,

every man had some 'extras,' and those who could find wives got wived. The supply was not equal to the demand, so some allied themselves to ladies of dusky origin. The civilian generally had the choice, for he had more pay, and in the words of the old saying, 'was worth 300*l.* a-year dead or alive,' alluding to the liberal pension provided for his widow. But how all these things have changed now. The exclusiveness of that proud civil service has been ruthlessly broken, and there is neither zeal nor *esprit de corps* in the Indian army; all that made the services dear to them has been trampled down; those who are compelled to seek a livelihood there now look upon themselves as unfortunate exiles, and reckon the days when a furlough to Europe will give them a temporary release. Increased facilities for returning home at constantly decreasing cost, and at one-sixth of the time formerly occupied on the voyage, tempt both the civilian and the military officer to revisit their native land after very short periods of service, and before the fads and friendships of boyhood have passed from their memories; there those whose circumstances admit of it find a helpmate, and so India is robbed of her eligible young men. Few young men in Indian employ can afford to marry now; the merchants and the railway officials are the only people who can afford to marry, and some of them live in great ostentation. There may be a greater number of young men in India, but a rupee is no longer two shillings; that is to say, it has depreciated in value, inasmuch as it takes a bigger bagful to buy a house or a horse or anything else, and many can scarcely make both ends meet with the requirements of bachelor

life only. A European regiment was once exiled to India for an unlimited period; now it only goes there for ten years, and its officers bring home scarcely any Indian wives. Even M. le Vicomte de Lesseps has damaged the Simla marriage market, for the cost of a passage to Europe has fallen fifteen per cent. since he dug his canal. But young ladies don't systematically go to India now-a-days husband seeking; some of them do, but such thoughts never enter the heads of the majority of those who take their annual flight in October and November; the parents of most of these young ladies are compelled to seek their livelihood there, and it is only natural that when school-days are over that a child should return to her parents' roof wheresoever that roof may be. To those who have nearly lived through the 'period of storms' at home, and who feel inclined sometimes to say, inwardly, 'I have India before me yet,' we might be permitted to say that those dreams of colonels and commissioners bowing down before you as soon as the vessel casts anchor at Garden Reach were never more than idle fables; hopes of this sort were never realised, and in that land now the same hard battles of life are to be fought, the same struggles for existence to be contended with.

To return to Simla for a little while longer. We have spoken of a ball and an opera; this latter is generally a miserable failure, the company numbering about five or six itinerant artistes of fifth-rate form. When the heavy August rains have passed, a new life coming with the lifting fogs brings sunny days, the forerunners of the picnic season.

The scenery in the neighbourhood of Simla is, perhaps, un-

surpassed in the world. Life here rises as if on wings amid tumbling waters and fir-shaded groves, with glimpses of the distant snow-capped peaks peering through the openings in the forest glades. Still a something solemn, and even pathetic, lurks amid all these triumphs of Nature; the charms of fleeting images seem too grand to grasp, too infinite for human understanding. Those dark distant hills clothed with the fir and the cedar to a height of nearly ten thousand feet, then starting up beyond the limits of vegetation, and burying their crests in eternal snows; hill-sides interspersed with gay convolvuli, and terrestrial and parasitic Orchideæ; beautiful flowers clustered among the trunks and roots of great trees, mingled with a *Pteris*, a *Polypodium*, and a *Goniopteris*, or other soft and silky ferns; distant fields white with buckwheat, or crimson with the *Amaranthus* in full bloom, nearly ripe for the harvest; tree balsams, wild dahlias and hibiscus, together with the wild yellow strawberry, in abundance wherever the rays of the sun are permitted to shine; while towering over all are the *C. deodara* and the *Pinus excelsa*, great and noble trees, although possessing, perhaps, neither the same beauty and immense size of some of the *Araucarias* and *Dammars* of Australia, nor yet as fascinating as the queer jointed shoots and weeping branches of the *Ca-suarina*.

Fit scenes these for outdoor enjoyment. Still something indescribably irksome and wearying seems to cling to all these open-air entertainments—'soul is wanting there.' A picnic in England varies according to the degree of the entertainers; but generally, from the highest to the lowest, the entertainment may be de-

scribed as a company of young people, with the smallest sprinkling of matrons possible, bent on enjoyment, and seated on the greensward, or amongst the heather, after the fashion of kangaroos, flinging conventionalities and dull care to the winds, and doing their utmost to devour cold meats in every uncomfortable position conceivable, while mirth and laughter ring through the neighbouring glens. The nature of the after-dinner frolics vary, as we have said, according to the degree of the company. Hide and seek, and kiss-in-the-ring, are eminently popular among the holiday-seekers on our great national outings, while every class, *more suo*, has its favourite amusements with less restraint than is practised in the ball-room or at the dinner-table. But in India the word has a wider signification. A local paper recently described a farewell picnic, given to a retiring up-country judge; the details were meagre, and no mention made whether his lordship contributed his own liquors on the occasion; a privilege conferred on most bachelors and grass-Benedicts who have the honour of invitations to these *al-fresco* amusements. It is not even stated whether the judge played kiss-in-the-ring, or got swamped in some inconceivable little dell at the foot of a waterfall—artful young ladies often get purposely swamped in these little traps, and then scream. It is presumed the honourable gentleman had attained a certain knowing and trustful age, and indulged in none of these things. Peradventure, he might have been married, for elderly bachelor civilians in India are about as common as blue dahlias. The Simla picnic, which occasionally lasts for days, and travels along from one roadside bungalow to

another, is, putting aside the period of its duration, perhaps the nearest approach to the English diversion; but it is far from being like its prototype in many ways, and a better name for these oriental enjoyments would be 'garden-parties'—they do somewhat resemble that new sort of hospitality now practised in England. Seemingly, the elements of mirth and gladness are there, but the ingredients won't mix. There is plenty of studied civility, but mirth seems bound by restraint; the great lawgiver's cold eye and grim visage is too cheerless for fun, frolic, and high jinks.

That one privileged little chariot, in which an old lady is drawn along the Mall daily, deserves notice, as 'tis the only vehicle on wheels to be found there; the European shops, where prices are more than exorbitant, the dingy library, where gossip has established her head-quarters, and the banks, the bootmakers, and the drapers—all that vocation would like honourable mention, but they must wait till they lower their prices. The season is fast waning now, those native errand-runners, clad in royal red gowns, and invariably carrying despatch-boxes with labels hanging from them, are fewer and less fleet of foot; the strollers at the bars on the Mall are 'beautifully less,'

and the ranks of the cavalry are thinned. The exodus is at first gradual, but the stream of departing guests grows thicker and thicker, culminating in a general stampede about the second week in October. The end of this month brings peace again, and the monkeys and leopards may rise from their lairs; the monkeys to gambol undisturbed in the forests of Jakko, and the leopards to reckon the dogs they have slaughtered.

The busy throng has departed, and by November the battle of the hills has been fought out; perhaps a few would-be Benedicts have been marked for further running down, and some sad hearts leaving the club with purses lightened have found temporary comfort in the bank hard by. Then Simla lies in peace. It is not deserted in winter; the merry laugh and the clatter of the horses' hoofs no longer resound on the slopes of Jakko, and the firs begin to bow 'neath the icicles which are to be their winter garments; but the blue smoke ascending from some of those sheltered cottages shows that life is still there, and that the parted season, transient and oscillating throughout, has, while obeying the unflinching law of Indian nature in descending to winter in the plains, left some few who have chosen to brave out the tempests high up there.





THE PICCADILLY PAPERS.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

IT is fit that in these loyal pages we should say a word in commemoration of that glorious day in English history which has so lately fixed the attention of the whole civilized world. A sight so noble, so affecting, so suggestive, it had hardly entered into the hearts of us Londoners to conceive. We have been led to ponder our national ways. A revelation has been made to us of national character and feeling, on which we may learn to rely surely in the far-reaching future, and which may give us some sure *data* in forecasting times to come. The day has been already fully discussed by those keen intellects and practised pens whose business is concerned with the passing events of life, and in making the world known to itself. The religious aspect of the day, its vast political significance, the extraordinary social phenomena it exhibited, have been watched from various points of views; but of a great national event like this one likes

to gather up one's own impressions and *souvenirs*.

It was a wonderful week, the like of which we shall hardly ever hope to see in England again. It was, indeed, a *Mi-Carême*, or, rather, a Carnival, but of a better sort than ever Carnival was before. For once there was an open drawing-room in the streets of London. We all met our friends, and exchanged our congratulations. All day long on Monday the frequent trains conveyed their contingent armies into London. The overflowing hotels refused any more customers, and it is an enigma how many a forlorn battalion found resting quarters for the night. The metropolis turned out of doors, and all the provinces had sent their contingents to the metropolis. The moving masses were deserving of study under many aspects, even under the slightly nervous feelings inspired by the alarmist articles in the 'Times.' I could not see everything under the rosy tints that

suit the accounts of the reporters. In the multitude that surged around the barriers in Fleet Street there were plenty of evil countenances to be seen, nothing in the way of political disputes, but, it seemed to us, with a decided taste for rioting and thieving. They constituted a small minority indeed,

'E'en the clear source and fount of day
Is dashed by wandering isles of night.'

there was an immense physical preponderance even in what might be called the lowest crowds of the lovers of loyalty and order.

The great day came. As early as eight in the morning the roll of carriages set in eastward from the west. Late the night before men had been busy on the triumphal arch at the Circus, near Ludgate Hill; and on the very morning, and to the latest moment, they were still busy with the evergreens, and giving finishing touches. How the rustics from the country stared! 'Lord!' exclaimed one old woman, 'it's like going up into Jerusalem!' And assuredly London had 'put on its beautiful garments;' had laid aside its sordid, careworn, hard, business appearance for a while. So we get on as we may, pushing through the crowd, and at last taking our places by Temple Bar. I envied the lady who occupied a seat straight above the Bar itself, and who looked alternately eastward and westward. The view from this point was magnificent, taking in the street from the Bar to the church, gay as a vast opera-house, and far beyond the dreams of any *impresario*. One almost felt anxious for that sacred chariot, with its precious freight, running the gauntlet of seven miles of almost frantic ovation. There was a pause of the procession here, as the civic au-

thorities — to be knighted and baroneted — transacted their ancient forms. Then the procession moved on once more, the speed being regulated by that of the Speaker's ponderous carriage. As it advanced the rearward masses poured into the streets, a confluence not so much of a crowd as of a multitude of multitudes.

There was, of course, infinite noise and revelry everywhere; but I feel also sure that not in that vast teeming cathedral alone were prayers and praises, with thanksgivings, raised to heaven. An emotion thrilling and indescribable had seized upon all hearts. There is something surely more mysterious and far reaching in the principle of loyalty than might be supposed; not only that in the crowd we find the expression of a country's splendour, unity, and power; but there is a sentiment of personal devotion enlisted, which may be unphilosophical, but which is yet an ultimate fact in English consciousness. I think the whole feeling of the day was wonderfully gathered up in Mr. Stone's beautiful hymn, which was sung not only in the cathedral, but in countless places throughout the land. The hymn produced, it is said, a most thrilling effect throughout the cathedral; but it ought to be read as published in its fair unmultiplied proportions, as a memento of the time.

I suppose the experiences of all of us were something in this way — it was a day, in the old phrase, 'much to be remembered.' Englishmen might be proud that they were English, that in an event like this they saw the historical past summed up, and for a moment seemed to catch a happy glimpse into the vista of a glorious future. There are two lines of poetry, at which the

sturdy Johnson would melt into tears—

‘Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by.’

But ‘the lords of human kind’ were in a happier attitude than that of pride and defiance. There were honourable tears, a touch of honest emotion for that royal home’s sorrow and rejoicing; men felt that they were brethren, faction was forgotten and the spirit of party. Human hearts are not finely touched save to fine issues, and that memorable Tuesday will long bear precious fruit in the quickened, intelligent loyalty of the people to the crown, and of the crown to the people.

THE WELLINGTON POLITICAL CORRESPONDENCE.

Mr. Disraeli remarks in the preface to the last edition of his ‘Lord George Bentinck,’ that there is no work fraught with a higher political value than the last volume of the ‘Wellington Correspondence.’ It embraces a considerable part of the period, during which the Duke was Prime Minister, and admits us into the very arena of his political life. We are all very much obliged to the present Duke for thus editing volume after volume of his father’s correspondence; but he is not a literary man, and he does not appear to have accepted the aid of a literary man, and so beyond a strictly chronological arrangement, we have neither notes, comment, narrative, or index to aid us. But this huge mass of correspondence is, in fact, a very quarry from which the materials of history may be dug in abundance. The volume last published of the ‘Wellington Correspondence’ merits careful study from all students of history; but, without attempting a complete

analysis, we will endeavour to gather up some of the points that lie within our range.

The new volume commences at the time when the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel seceded from the Cabinet when Mr. Canning was appointed Premier. The ostensible reason was that Mr. Canning was supposed to favour the Roman Catholic claims. But when we recollect that the Duke, in his administration, left the Roman Catholic question an open question, and, subsequently, himself carried the legislation of relief, it becomes very clear that this was not the real reason. The fact is, that Canning disliked the Wellesleys and the Wellesleys disliked Canning. The upper classes generally disliked and mistrusted the son of the actress, and the Duke thoroughly sided with his class. We find, with great regret, that the Duke indulges in a perfect tirade of angry language when Canning is mentioned. His ministry is ‘falsehood personified,’ he is charged with ‘temper,’ the ‘spirit of intrigue,’ ‘avowed hostility to the aristocracy,’ &c. The Duke alleged that a letter of Canning’s was couched in ‘terms of taunt and rebuke.’ We do not see how the letter can bear such a construction, and it really seems to us that the Duke quibbled in the matter. Canning died, heart-sick at the desertion of so many political comrades. Then Lord Goderich formed a ministry, to all the weakness of which the Duke was keenly alive from the first. One of the Duke’s correspondents thus sums up his impressions of some letters of Lord Brougham’s that he had seen: ‘Such a tissue of personal vanity, selfishness, and ostentatious display of independence and liberality, with so much arrogance, it has never fallen to my lot to ob-

serve in the correspondence of any public man high or low.' The Duke appears to have had a decided taste for political gossip, and his correspondents seek to gratify the taste. We find the Duke applying to Lord Goderich for a peerage, which he got, for his brother Henry, so that four brothers had seats in the House of Lords. The Goderich ministry soon showed signs of quavering to a fall: 'It is altogether a pretty mess,' wrote Fitzroy Somerset to the Duke. Then the Duke was called upon to form a ministry, and commenced his semi-aristocratic, semi-military rule. It was said that the Duke ruled his ministry as he ruled his army; and in the correspondence this really appears to have been rather the case. It was even whispered that the King himself was coerced by the great soldier. He asked Mr. Huskisson to join him, and when Mr. Huskisson suggested conditions the Duke snubbed him—an unpropitious commencement of their alliance. The Duke affected to dislike the premiership, which he tells Lord Westmoreland was given him 'for my sins.' He writes to Peel, 'Now, my dear Peel, I entreat you to come to town, in order that I may consult with you and have the benefit of your co-operation in the execution of this interesting commission.' Then the Duke had to reconstruct his ministry, and had this kind of pleasant letter to write to various distinguished men, which they all obeyed with much meekness.

'MY DEAR SIR,—I am very much concerned that I find myself under the necessity of asking you to resign your seat on the Board of Treasury. I sincerely wish that this disagreeable duty had fallen into other hands. It could not have fallen upon anybody who

regrets it more than, my dear sir, yours, &c. WELLINGTON.'

The Duke accompanied such a dismissal with a private note, written, as Mr. Gladstone said of himself the other night, 'in terms as nearly approaching to civility as he could command,' but which, in reality, simply varied the terms of the friendly intimation. The defences of the country, and our foreign relations, naturally occupied much of his attention. We find among his papers a long and careful account of the French navy. Then he has to keep a careful watch over foreign courts. The ambassador at Lisbon was afraid that the Duke's private correspondence in Portugal might be injurious to him. The Duke writes: 'I have not written a line to Lisbon except to yourself. I will go further, and tell you this. I have been too long in the public service of this country, and know my duty in office too well, to think of writing to anybody upon public affairs, excepting the official person charged with the conduct of the particular affair under discussion. I commanded abroad for many years; and had two brothers at different times and many friends always in the cabinet. I never wrote a line to anybody except to the Secretary of State. On the other hand, when in office and in the cabinet I always refused to correspond even with my own brother, who was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; and for six years I never wrote to him except upon mere family affairs, such as his marriage.' It certainly does not strike us that the Duke was over affectionate to his relations. On the question of the possible invasion of Canada, the Duke said, that there was no doubt that the militia, if once got together, with five thousand regular troops, would

be equal to the defence of Canada. But times have greatly changed since the Duke expressed this opinion to a committee of the House of Commons. Then applications for peerages cost him a good deal of trouble. One man asks for an Irish peerage, but the Duke tells him that his experience is that Irish peers won't live in Ireland. Another man applies, but the Duke tells him, with rough frankness, that he has not got enough money to support the title. But his administration was full of political blunders. One of the greatest of these was his insisting that Mr. Huskisson's resignation should be carried, that there had been no mistake and should be no mistake. Weak as he was in the House of Commons, he could ill afford to lose Huskisson's services. His short peremptory way might suit military subordinates, but was a great mistake when applied to 'my dear Huskisson.' The Duke subsequently witnessed that lamentable first railway accident when Huskisson lost his life, and the impression was never effaced. He never liked travelling by rail afterwards, and used to post until post-horses were no longer to be got. Then he had an immense deal of trouble on account of the Duke of Clarence's irregularities as Lord High Admiral. Sir George Cockburn, one of the Duke's council, gave unpalatable advice, whereupon H.R.H. took it as a personal affront, and insisted that Sir George should resign. But the Duke supported the Admiral and the King supported the Duke. There is something certainly very absurd in the royal Duke's letter, full of pettishness and emphatic italics. We are able to understand how no sovereign ever ruled this country with less personal weight. At one time, indeed, he shook

hands with Sir George and invited him to dinner, but this did not really clear up matters. The King assured the Duke of Wellington that no man ever had a better sense of discipline than his brother, but H.R.H. was not moved by this conciliatory language. Then George the Fourth was aroused, and wrote a letter, of which the late Mr. Thackeray would hardly have thought him capable. Such a letter goes far to redeem a memory that has never been popular. 'I am quite aware,' wrote the King, 'that I am drawing fast to the close of my life; it may be the will of the Almighty that a month, a week, nay, a day, may call the Lord High Admiral to be my successor. I love my brother William, I have always done so to my heart's core; and I will leave him an example of what the inherent duties of a king of this country really are. The Lord High Admiral shall strictly obey the laws enacted by Parliament, as attached to his present station, or I desire immediately to receive his resignation.' *O si sic omnia!* Afterwards the King appeared to retreat from the high ground he had taken up. The whole affair was intensely annoying to the Duke. At times the thorns of power pricked him smartly. He writes to the Prince of Orange, that he is in a 'situation for the performance of the duties of which I am not qualified, and they are very disagreeable to me.' To Sir Robert Peel he writes, 'Between the King and his brothers the Government of this country has become a most heart-breaking concern. Nobody can ever know where he stands upon any subject.' At one time the Duke had to contemplate the possible alienation of Peel. 'The loss of Peel would be a terrible blow,' writes Charles Ar-

buthnot to Lord Bathurst, 'but the Duke will never abandon the helm in despair, and would work with inferior tools if he should be deprived of the better ones.' The Duke was not the man to give up. The King's Government must be carried on. He writes to the late Bishop of Exeter, a rather frequent correspondent, 'God will keep me in the right road I hope, but I don't believe that this country was ever placed in a position of such difficulty.'

Everybody who chose wrote to the Duke, and the Duke always sent a careful reply. Mr. George Stephen, the friend of Wilberforce, writes to him quite a little exhortation on the Slave Trade. 'Ah! my Lord Duke, God has raised you up as an instrument of astonishing mercies to your country and mankind. Let not, then, your purest glories be sullied by siding with the oppressors against the oppressed. Add, rather, a wreath to your brow more brilliant and more lasting than the many it is already girt with, by succouring and sustaining, as you of all men best can, that sacred, but, I fear, sinking cause of which I am a feeble advocate. Secure to yourself consolation in your declining years, etc.' The Duke sent back a long but rather a tart answer. He had very little sympathy with the Anti-Slavery cause. Ultimately that cause became very much a political cry, and abolition was carried without any of those safeguards which would have made it much more beneficial.

The Duke of Wellington's great difficulty was Ireland, especially in the matter of the Clare election. His foreign policy, especially in his support of Don Miguel, was not popular. The Duke did not comprehend the nature of the political forces working in the country. He quite misappreciated

the position of Mr. Canning. By deserting him Canning virtually broke up the old Tory domination that had lasted, with brief intervals, for seventy years, and prepared the way for the Liberal domination that, with brief intervals, has lasted for forty years. It has lately been shown by Lord Dalling, in his 'Life of Palmerston,' what momentous results flowed from his loss of Mr. Huskisson in his councils. If the Duke had passed a novice in political offices, and in the House of Commons, he would have been a better Premier. But there were ample compensations for this in the glorious career that saved England. We have only dealt with one volume, the latest, of the 'Wellington Correspondence.' The study of these volumes is as much a necessity for the politician as 'Hansard' itself, or as the study of Colonel Gurwood's 'Despatches of the Duke of Wellington,' for military students. There are countless points of interest for the general reader, which we trust will one day be presented to them in a more concise form than as a series of bulky volumes of correspondence.

NOTES ON BOOKS.

There are few books of travel written with greater vigour, or dealing with a larger variety of subjects, or more abounding with striking thought and phrase, or more stimulating and suggestive, than Mr. Zincke's book on Egypt. It is more valuable than any recent volume in Egyptology to which we can refer. We are conducted with almost dazzling rapidity to subject after subject as if through the revolutions of a kaleidoscope. Whether he is discussing the theology and ethnology of Egypt, or dealing with Alexandrian theology, or talking

about trees, gardens, and animals, or discussing such social questions as polygamy or houri-ism, or debating the political and economical questions involved in the canalization of the Isthmus, or facing the profoundest problems of human life and speculation, Mr. Zinke is always vivid and thoughtful. It strikes us, however, that he occupies too much ground, that he often does not go deep enough, that some of his conclusions are to be distrusted.

But it is with what we may call the modern spirit of the book that the reader will, we think, be chiefly struck. Mr. Zinke draws his contrasts, similarities, and analogies from England, and, so far as may be, reduces all things to English standards or an English comparison. Thus, in speaking of landlordism, he says: 'Those old Egyptian landlords were not altogether unlike their English representatives. There are traces in them of a family likeness. They were much addicted to field sports. You see this everywhere in the sculptures, and paintings. You find there plenty of scenes of fowling, fishing, and hunting; of running down the gazelle and spearing the hippopotamus; of coursing and netting hares; of shooting wild cattle with arrows, and of catching them with the lasso. They had, too, their game-laws. They were fond of dogs and of horses. They kept very good tables. They gave morning and evening parties. They amused themselves with games of skill and chance. They thought a great deal of their ancestors, as well they might, for a thousand years went but for little in the date of the patents of their nobility. They built fine houses, and furnished them magnificently. They paid great attention to horticulture and arbori-

culture.' Similarly he draws a parallel between the village Achmed of Egypt and poor Hodge the ploughman at home, in which, not without difficulty, he makes the balance incline in favour of Hodge. He gives a vivid account of the Egyptian theory of the progress of a mummy's soul, which is partly like the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and partly reminds us of Moore's two works, 'Alciphron,' and the 'Epicurean.' He does not take at all a hopeful view of Egyptian prospects. 'Their idea of blissfulness is that of the Arab of the desert. Shelter and rest; plashing fountains and delightful odours; lovely houris. This is not the stuff that makes men.' Still he thinks that much may be done by the influx of modern ideas and free discussion on them. Mr. Zinke seems to have no idea of missionary agency. He gives a good deal of attention to what he calls the 'canalization' of the Isthmus. He evidently thinks it an immense pity that a sweet-water canal was not constructed, which might have been done at half the cost, and 'would have contained an inexhaustible storage of water to fertilize and to cover with life and wealth a new Egypt. The French have the credit of forming the canal, but the larger part of the capital was found by Englishmen in advances to the Khedive.' He thinks that the canal must ultimately absorb the whole of the traffic of Europe with Asia. He thinks that we shall receive the greatest benefit from it, though not so much as Southern and Central Europe. In case of a war, if we could hold the two extremities, all our Eastern commerce might be safely conducted within narrow seas. We have chiefly mentioned the more salient points of interest presented by Mr. Zinke;

but he himself will probably think that its interest lies rather in his speculation and philosophy, and mode of dealing with abstract questions; but in this opinion we should by no means agree with him.

'The Earl and the Doctor' are, of course, Lord Pembroke and Dr. Kingsley. The young lord certainly shows a large portion of inherited ability on both the father's and the mother's side. In 'South Sea Bubbles' we have a book of genuine experiences in the Pacific. It is full of the glamour and aroma of youth, and the natural high spirits that prevail throughout are full of exhilaration for the reader. To us the value of this book is in its promise rather than its performance. We perceive that a young peer of great natural ability, and already of varied experience, and with infinite potentiality for good, is added to the hereditary chamber. We trust that he will soon have something to say, 'in his place,' on the subject of the Melanesian piracies that cost Bishop Patteson his life. He tells us that there are only a few ruffians employed in the trade, and that what we want is a smart boat able to go anywhere after them. Here is, doubtless, a reference to the bishop: 'The attire in which, I believe, our noble, true-hearted man—a real bishop—sometimes addresses his good words to the savage heathen of Melanesia would scandalize all Dissenters; though 'tis, for the most part, a time-honoured garment, and, moreover, in his case, a comely and well-fitting one. Of

course, the newer and more rational missionaries dress as suits the climate, and, I think, their profession. Why a minister of light and purity should dress in garments more suited in colour to the worship of the devil himself I could never make out.' We do not see much in Lord Pembroke's last observation. There is no devil-worship in wearing mourning. The language of the book is throughout excessively flippant, and, at times, hardly quotable. He even voluntarily proclaims himself 'the fool of fools who consciously and defiantly proclaims his assinity to the world in general,' but we hope that in future he will not justify this precocious statement. All through the work he runs full tilt against the missionaries, attacking Dissenters, Roman Catholics, and Churchmen with equal impartiality, but, at the same time, he is constrained to bear witness to the immense good they have achieved. The account of the shipwreck is really thrilling, more especially as another Tichborne case might probably have been extracted from it. He is very merry about the conceited Tongans. 'Tongans first,' say they, 'then white men, and then all the rest of the world.' They hold that Wellington and Napoleon I. were both Tongans, having drifted away in canoes to Europe. 'Tonga,' said one of the orators, 'is a great power; so was the Roman empire; but she extended her conquests too far, and so fell. Let us beware, lest the same fate should befall Tonga.'

F. ARNOLD.



THE END OF THE WORLD

THE END OF THE WORLD

THE END OF THE WORLD